Charles James Fox

JOHN DRINKWATER

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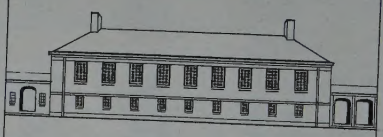

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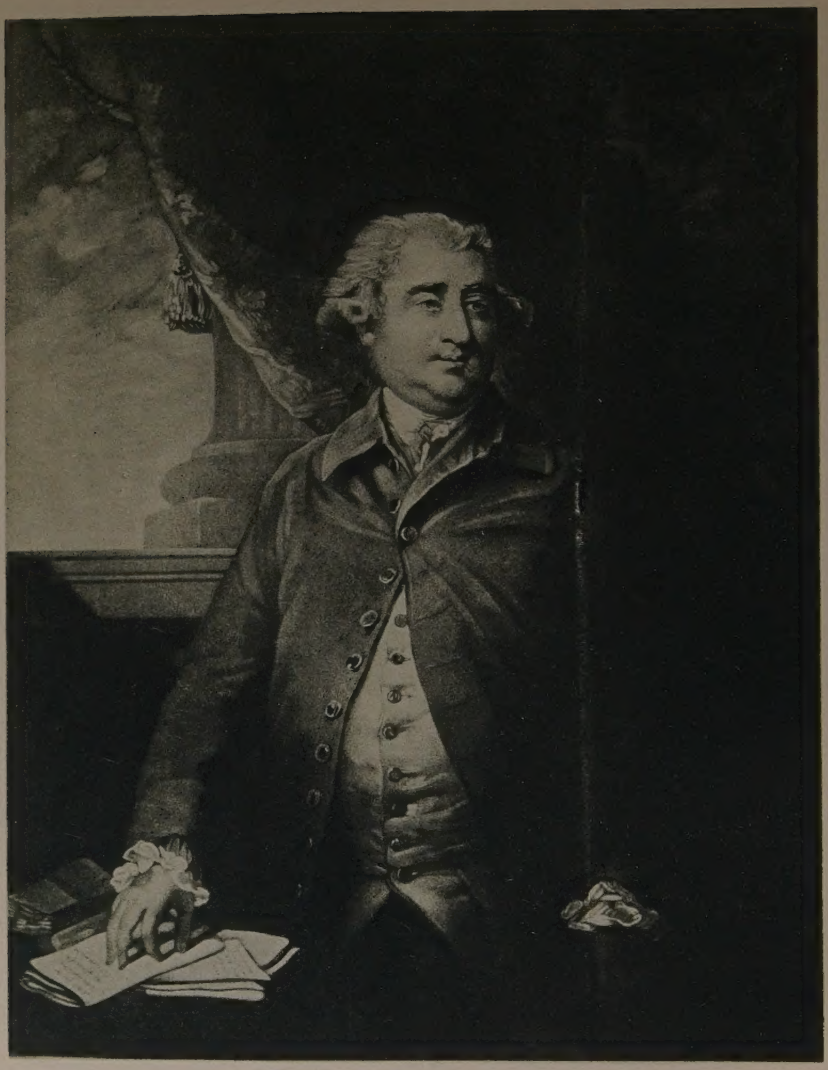
House of Commons.

CHARLES JAMES FOX

By

John Drinkwater



CHARLES JAMES FOX
From the portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds

CHARLES JAMES FOX

By

John Drinkwater

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CHARLES JAMES FOX

CHARLES JAMES FOX

CHAPTER I

Birth and Early Years
1749–1768

I

CHARLES JAMES FOX WAS BORN IN CONDUIT STREET, City of Westminster, on January 24, 1749. His near ancestry affords a striking instance of the intimate contacts that are sometimes made between far-distant points of history. Stephen Fox, Charles's grandfather and the founder of the family fortunes, was born of humble yeoman stock in 1627, at the moment when Charles I was highly displeased with his insubordinate Commons about a Petition of Right. Stephen was a man of parts and industry, became a loyal cavalier, fought for Charles II at the battle of Worcester, prospered at the Restoration, was made Sir Stephen, and disputes with Nell Gwyn the credit of having established Chelsea Hospital; to which, at least, he was able out of his savings to contribute a sum of thirteen thousand pounds.

But he did more than this. At the age of seventy-seven he married a second time and begot four children. The second of these, Henry, afterwards the first Lord Holland, married Georgiana Caroline, daughter of the second Duke of Richmond, and therefore the grandchild of Charles II and Louise de Kérouaille. Charles James was

their third son, over a hundred and twenty years separating his grandfather's birth from his own.

The Richmonds, acutely sensible of their illustrious descent, were much vexed by the alliance of their daughter with a commoner, but Henry Fox proved to be an amiable and devoted husband, which is by much the best that can be said of him. He is one of the classic knaves of English politics, and like many knaves he was by no means devoid of charm and character. His corruption had the peculiar merit of being an open profession. He raided the public funds and traded the favors of office with superb effrontery. He boasted with genuine satisfaction that he was the best-hated man in the country, which he deservedly was. Lord Chesterfield, with nicer perceptions, complained that the technique was clumsy, as attracting popular attention to practices that ought to be decently private. In reply to which Henry Fox could invite his critic's attention to a splendid fertile bank-balance.

He could, in fact, demonstrate by wide experience that honesty was by no means the best policy. He was well content to become rich by forfeiting a general esteem that he did not covet. No officer of the state has left a name less honored or less honorable, but his career affords no more satisfaction to the moralist than that he was at last a somewhat disappointed man in getting a barony instead of an earldom. What he stole from the public he put affectionately to domestic uses. Had he been impeached for looting the treasury, no one could have pitied him; but his family life was one of serene attachments.

As a father he was indulgent without conditions, and Charles was his especial favorite. At the age of five the boy was his father's adored companion, and warmly encouraged to believe that anything he liked was good for

him. When a garden wall was to be blown up with gunpowder, Charles was promised that he should see the operation, but somehow it was carried out in his absence. At the bidding of parental fondness the wall was promptly rebuilt in order that Charles might witness its second destruction. This, it is said, was a valuable example to youth of the propriety of keeping one's word, an engaging motive to attribute to Henry Fox. Agreeable follies of this kind were succeeded by graver laxities.

In the year of Charles's birth his parents acquired the tenancy of Holland House, the home of his boyhood and youth. Here he became a "very pert, very argumentative," and, as everyone allowed, a very charming child. He was systematically spoiled in spite of Lady Caroline's dutiful protests, but it says much for his natural quality that the wilful boy of his father's making developed into nothing of a prig. On one occasion he walked into the study when his father was preparing some official papers, and finding a dispatch that he took leave to read not to his liking, put it on the fire, whereupon the secretary of state without remonstrance proceeded to rewrite it from his notes. This was the youth who as a child had announced his intention of destroying a watch, to be met with "Well, if you must, I suppose you must." There is a less likely story of Charles in petticoats, desiring to wash in a bowl of cream on the dinner table, and seeing it removed to the floor by parental orders so that he might sit in it.

At the age of seven Charles was asked whether he would stay at home until he was old enough for Eton, or go to a preparatory school. His choice was decided by his mother's inaccuracy on a point of Roman history; concluding that home tuition was unsuitable, he elected for M. Pampellone's academy for young gentlemen at

Wandsworth, where he found "more boys of some station in life than usual in so small a number." In 1758 he was advanced to Eton, paternal anxiety as to his health being relieved by frequent requests that Charles might be excused his studies for the amusements of the town. He attended the coronation of George III in 1761, a small and unnoted spectator who was to become exceedingly eminent among that sovereign's vexations. About the same time he broke his arm, an accident of which the press took notice, and Henry Fox was moved by the inquiries that followed to observe with his accustomed insight, "The boy is a great deal better beloved than his father is."

Two years later the father considered that his son needed a more extended diversion, and took him abroad for some months, being himself much diverted in the evenings at Spa by watching his idol at the age of fourteen manipulating a nightly allowance of five guineas at the tables. Charles returned to England a very promising young rake, but had the good sense to insist on going back to Eton, where Dr. Barnard, the head master, took an early opportunity of reminding him that his newly acquired social accomplishments were no charm against the birch.

At the end of 1763 he was taken by his father to hear parliament debating the publications of John Wilkes, of whom we shall hear a good deal more, and on November 15 he saw Lord North rise to move that "the paper entitled the North Briton, N° 45, is a false, scandalous, and seditious libel," and much more to the same purpose. He may also have seen one Williams, a journeyman printer connected with the North Briton, taken to the pillory in a coach marked "N° 45," while the mob cheered him as a martyr and collected a sum of two hundred pounds for his benefit. Precocious as he was, Charles was not yet old

enough to question his father's view of the enormities that were being committed by the ruffian Wilkes and his gang against the sacred figure of majesty; but his active and high-spirited young mind may already have begun to suspect that majesty was not behaving itself very well.

2

In the October term of 1764, he entered Hertford College, Oxford, being then just under sixteen years of age. The scholastic requirements of that establishment were not exacting, but his most inveterate enemies never denied that Fox was an eager worker, and already at the university he went a long way beyond necessity in application. At the end of his first term he writes, "I like Oxford well enough. I read there a great deal, and am very fond of mathematics." And two months later to the same correspondent, an old tutor:

"I am heartily obliged to you for your advice about French, which I will undoubtedly follow, as I am thoroughly convinced of its utility. I read here much, and like vastly—what I know you think useless—mathematics. I believe they are useful, and I am sure they are entertaining, which is alone enough to recommend them to me. I did not expect my life here could be so pleasant as I find it; but I really think, to a man who reads a great deal, there cannot be a more agreeable place. . . . If there were any way of sending you pamphlets, I would send you a new poem called 'The Traveller,' which appears to me to have a great deal of merit." *

* Thirteen years later, Boswell noted in his journal: "Sir Joshua. 'I was glad to hear Charles Fox say it ["The Traveller"] was one of the finest poems in the English language.' Langton. 'Why was you glad? You surely had no doubt of this before.' Johnson. 'No; the merit of "The Traveller" is so well established, that Mr. Fox's praise cannot augment it, nor his censure diminish it.'" The next day Boswell, referring to the conversation,

His affection for Oxford could induce him to stay there through vacation, bettering his considerable knowledge of the classics, and spending his evenings with a friend in a bookseller's shop, to read the English dramatic poets. In after years he could say that there was no play published in England before the Restoration that he did not know intimately. The habit of scholarship came to him easily and pleasantly, and he never lost it. When someone in his presence disputed the authenticity of a line in the Iliad because it was in a measure unknown to Homer, Fox disconcerted him by quoting twenty others to match it. We may blush at the style, but there is no reason to doubt the veracity of the panegyrist who declared that "he was, indeed, capable of conversing with a Longinus on the beauty, sublimity, and pathos of Homer; with an Aristotle on his delineations of man; and with a pedagogue on his dactyls, spondees, and anapæsts."

That this erudition was acquired by his own goodwill rather than under tutorial discipline is shown in a remarkable letter that he received, during an absence abroad, from the head of his college, Dr. Newcome, afterwards Primate of Ireland. It is at once a pleasing tribute to Fox's industry, and a nice commentary on the educational ways then prevalent among young men of fashion. Dr. Newcome, though a little surprised on first receiving the news, thinks on reflection that his pupil has done wisely in deciding to take a long leave from Hertford. "Application like yours requires some intermission, and you are the only person with whom I have ever had

was told, "Yes, sir, I knocked Fox on the head without ceremony. Reynolds is too much under Fox and Burke at present." But Johnson admired Fox, and liked him. In 1784 he said, "I am for the King against Fox; but I am for Fox against Pitt. . . . The King is my master; but I do not know Pitt; and Fox is my friend."

connection to whom I could say this. I expect that you will return with much keenness for Greek and for lines and angles. As to trigonometry, it is a matter of entire indifference to the other geometricians of the college, who will probably continue some time here, whether they proceed to other branches of mathematics immediately, or wait a term or two longer. You need not, therefore, interrupt your amusements by severe studies, for it is wholly unnecessary to take a step onwards without you, and therefore we shall stop until we have the pleasure of your company. All your acquaintance here which I know, are well, but not much happier for your absence."

Fox remained at Oxford until the spring of 1766, paying frequent visits to London, taking a lively interest in parliamentary debates, and making the acquaintance of Edmund Burke, then thirty-seven years of age, who was now for the first time attracting the attention of the House as a powerful but, it was considered, a somewhat too idealistic orator. The meeting was a momentous one for both men, but at present Burke could hardly be conscious of the admiration that his candor and brilliant sincerity were exciting in the lad of seventeen. And at this time there was a whisper in the Fox household that had in it more of augury than was then known. Lady Holland, as she now was, Henry Fox having received his peerage in 1763, returning from a call on Lady Chatham, told her husband that young William Pitt, then seven years old, was the cleverest child she had ever seen, and so strictly brought up and proper in his behavior that "mark my words, that little boy will be a thorn in Charles's side as long as he lives." Lord Holland did not appreciate his wife's reflection on the childhood of their own son, but her ladyship was surprisingly in the confidence of Destiny.

3

From September, 1766, until the end of 1768 Charles was traveling on the Continent, chiefly in Italy, sometimes with his parents, and sometimes with friends of his own age, among them Frederick Howard, Byron's Lord Carlisle, and that fervent prophet of the picturesque, Uvedale Price. On the tour he followed pleasure and study alike with pertinacity. "At present I read nothing but Italian, which I am immoderately fond of, particularly of the poetry." He kept his undertaking to his tutor, and many of his letters were now written in accomplished French. One of his chief enthusiasms at the time was for amateur acting, and his head was full of schemes for play production. A partner in these enterprises was Richard Fitzpatrick, the wit and soldier who was afterwards to hold office in the Ministry of all the Talents. "In general," says the third Lord Holland, "Mr. Fox was preferred in tragedy; but General Fitzpatrick was supposed yet more decidedly to have the superiority in genteel comedy."

In a letter to Fitzpatrick from Florence, Charles laments that in a recent performance he fell very short of his own expectations, and, though his spirit is not broken, he resolves to attempt less conspicuous parts in future. He adds that his brother Stephen acted well in the comedy, but that unfortunately he did not know his part in the tragedy, while Carlisle is not an excellent but will make a useful actor, and another friend made a mess of his tragedy through carelessness but was inimitable in the comedy, and was a great acquisition to the company. However, while they had the best manager-prompter in the world, they were in need of another actor or two, and

above all of another actress. These observations seem to have referred to some performance in Italy, but also to have been made in preparation for future productions in England, whither Charles hoped to return early in August, 1768.

On his homeward journey he called by appointment on Voltaire at Ferney, accompanied by Price. Voltaire was old and infirm, and seldom received visitors, but said he could not refuse an applicant bearing the illustrious name of Fox. He welcomed his young guests in the garden, where for a time he conversed with them while walking to and fro, refreshed them with chocolate, gave them a list of his works that he considered most likely to fortify their minds against religious prejudice, and dismissed them.

Lady Sarah Lennox,* Charles Fox's aunt, but only four years older than he, wrote to a correspondent from Holland House in 1766: "Charles is at home; he improves every day, or rather the amiableness of his caracter appears every day, for 'tis all natural to him. You cannot immagine the comfort he is to both his father and mother, and his constant attention to them is really beyond what I can discribe." The comfort, however, was not unqualified. The instruction so fondly given by his father at Spa had been handsomely bettered by Charles on his continental tour, and one friendly gossip asserts

* She was—but Thackeray has said it perfectly—"lovely black-haired Sarah Lennox, about whose beauty Walpole has written in raptures, and who used to lie in wait for the young Prince [afterwards George III] and make hay at him on the lawn of Holland House. He sighed and he longed, but he rode away from her. Her picture still hangs in Holland House, a magnificent masterpiece of Reynolds, a canvas worthy of Titian. She looks from the castle window, holding a bird in her hand, at black-eyed young Charles Fox, her nephew. The Royal bird flew away from lovely Sarah. She had to figure as bridesmaid at her little Mecklenburg rival's wedding, and died in her own time a quiet old lady, who had become the mother of the heroic Napier."

that "he returned one of the most egregious coxcombs in Europe." Samuel Rogers describes him as being at that time "a prodigious dandy, wearing a little odd French hat, shoes with red heels, etc.," and adds that he and Carlisle once "travelled from Paris to Lyons for the express purpose of buying waistcoats, and during the whole journey talked of nothing else."

When Henry Fox, Lord Holland, died in 1774, he left what was for those days a vast fortune, and already in 1768 he had jobbed himself into a considerable magnificence of wealth. Henry Fox, in a "Political Sketch of the Years 1760–1763," published by Lady Ilchester from MSS. in her "Life and Letters of Lady Sarah Lennox" makes a superb exposure of his own public standards: "The sudden and great rise in stocks [in 1762] has made me richer than I ever intended or desir'd to be. Obloquy generally attends money so got, but with how much reason in all cases let this simple account of my gains show. The Government borrow money at 20 per cent disct., I am not consulted or concerned in making the bargain. I have as Pay Master great sums in my hands, which, not applicable to any present use, must either lye dead in the Bank, or be employ'd by me. I lend this to the Government in 1761. A peace is thought certain. I am not in the least consulted, but my very bad opinion of Mr. Pitt makes me think it will not be concluded: I sell out, and gain greatly. In 1762, I lend again; a peace comes, in which again I am not consulted, and I again gain greatly." With pretty humor, his lordship writes in the same notes, "Pitt, like his mob, is never embarrass'd by any degree of shame." He was unlikely to grudge his son as many silk waistcoats as he chose to buy; but when the young man of nineteen turned up with gambling and other debts contracted in every town that he had vis-

ited, amounting, it is said, in Naples alone to sixteen thousand pounds, even his lordship may have suffered a moment's discouragement. But the pang was fugitive, the debts were paid, Charles's taste for the tables became an infatuation, and six years later his father had once more to rescue him, this time to the tune of a hundred and forty thousand pounds. At the age of sixteen he had been elected to Almack's Club, afterwards Brooks's. On his return to London he became one of its most indefatigable patrons, playing at a rate that is reserved in our own age for the more respectable medium of the stock exchange.

For some years into his early manhood Fox belonged to a company that would sit at cards from ten o'clock in the evening until six the following afternoon, a waiter standing by to remind their drowsy wits whose the next deal was. At Almack's, Horace Walpole tells us, there was generally ten thousand pounds in specie on the table. The players "began by pulling off their embroidered clothes, and put on frieze great-coats, or turned their coats inside outwards for luck. They put on pieces of leather, such as worn by footmen when they clean knives to save their lace ruffles; and to guard their eyes from the light, and to prevent tumbling their hair, wore high-crowned straw hats with broad brims, and adorned with flowers and ribbons; masks to conceal their emotions when they played at Quinze . . . They borrowed great sums of Jews at exorbitant premiums. Charles Fox called his outward room . . . the Jerusalem Chamber."

In games of skill, as whist and piquet, Fox was so good a player that it was said that if he had confined himself to these he might have averaged four thousand a year from his winnings; but in games of chance his luck was commonly out, and he could with great ease lose as much at a sitting. On one occasion Topham Beauclerk

left him in the small hours of the morning after a disastrous night, and later in the day called in some anxiety as to what might have happened to his friend in desperation. He found him reading Herodotus; he expressed surprise, and Fox asked what else there was for him to do, since he had lost his last shilling.

The morality of all this must be decided by those who perceive more clearly than I do what are the standards by which it can be judged. Class distinction in England may still today have survived in some measure the onsets of democracy, but in Fox's time it was so absolute as almost to escape observation. The titled aristocracy, often of precarious origins, and a large group of great families who had acquired political influence, together formed a class that at once controlled government and constituted the world of fashion, a world that occasionally condescended to a poet or an actor-manager, and otherwise preserved a lofty superiority towards the rest of mankind save on such occasions as "the people" formed a useful figure in political debate.

Talent might sometimes make its way without the aid of birth or connection, and the ruling class itself was not without men who paid more than lip-service to popular claims. But socially, the nobility and the powerful political houses, Whig and Tory alike, formed a close corporation of a jealously exclusive nature. It was not wholly affectation that made Byron assume a greater respect for his coronet than for his art. Every party he attended in London was thronged with people who had inherited the belief that not to be born in the purple could hardly be said to have been born at all.

Within this charmed circle there was as much ability and native goodness as elsewhere; opportunity, indeed, no doubt induced a politer and on the whole a more ad-

mirable mode than was prevalent in less favored classes of society. But opportunity also embraced the means of indulgences denied to the common run of humanity. Nearly everyone in the world of power and fashion was rich. Inherited wealth was readily augmented on an impressive scale in an age of political corruption grosser than anything known to the statesmanship of this country before or since. The corruption was, indeed, a generally and openly accepted expedient. The first of the great Hanoverian ministers, Sir Robert Walpole, would have laughed with genuine astonishment if it had been seriously suggested that the purchase of support at the price of a peerage or a sinecure was improper, and his example was followed without scruple by the chiefs of both parties who succeeded him in leadership. There were exceptions, as we shall see, but the common practice meant that to belong to the upper classes was to be in an exceedingly favorable position for fattening your purse, and the advantage was one seldom neglected.

The generation of this affluent world into which Charles Fox was born had one universal form of dissipation. It gambled almost to a man, and, it may be added, to a woman. "The ladies game too deep for me," wrote Horace Walpole. "The last time I was in town, Lady Hertford wanted one, and I lost fifty-six guineas before I could say an Ave Maria. I do not know a teaspoonful of news. I could tell you what was trumps, but that was all I heard."

The journals of the time abound in stories of fortunes made and lost on a throw, and it was a common thing for a man of wealth to beggar himself one evening and borrow a hundred guineas with which to double his lost patrimony the next. This private recklessness was symptomatic of the cynicism with which the public funds

were for the most part treated by those who controlled them, and what was a commonplace then, if not impossible in our own time, would at least be a scandal that would not be tolerated for a week. We have our own corruptions, but the open elevation of bribery to a principle of government does not happen to be one of them. Robert Walpole's conviction that every man had his price was not all; the price did not even always buy support for the king's government, but was often paid to gratify purely personal attachments or to discharge private obligations.

To say that these practices were open is, perhaps, not strictly accurate, since even then a minister rarely had the hardihood to say to the public that he was corrupt and be damned to them, though Henry Fox came as near it as no matter. The lampooners never quite reached the point of regarding breach of public trust as too venial an offense to be worth pillorying, but they brought little conviction to the exposure of abuses that everybody recognized and very few people minded. William Bodham Donne, in his masterly introduction to "The Correspondence of King George the Third with Lord North,"* remarks acutely: "The political press dealt in libels on persons, but not in any large or consistent principles on either side. The power of the North Briton and of Junius was that of the libeller only."

This was particularly true of the censures directed against corruption. They afforded an easy method of attacking ministers, but they were seldom inspired by principles of any kind. To cry out upon a minister's ways was as far as possible from any real desire that he should mend them. Corruption was a condition of the political game, and it was exploited freely as a prerogative by gov-

* London, 1867.

ernment and as a grievance by the opposition; but no effective body of opinion wanted to alter the rules.

These circumstances have to be remembered when it is advanced as a merit in Charles Fox that in his public life he honorably disdained the common practices of his class and calling. It may seem to be an equivocal kind of honor that kept a man to scrupulous conduct among the temptations that then beset a political career, and allowed him in gaming to squander vast sums of money that his father had amassed by auctioning the spoils of office. Charles might have argued with cynical logic that what was ill-gotten was well wasted, but he no doubt reflected on the sources of his receipts as little as the inheritors of fortunes taken from the public by other though perhaps hardly less questionable methods. And in gaming as he did he was doing extensively what not to have done at all would have marked him in his society as merely odd.

4

In March, 1768, Charles Fox was returned as member of parliament by the electors of Midhurst in the county of Sussex. That is to say, while he himself was absent in Italy, his father used his influence and whatever other inducements were necessary to engage the interests of the small pocket borough of that name in favor of the boy who was now just over nineteen years of age. The new member had a constituency, but no tangible constituents, the borough in question consisting of certain uninhabited acres that were farmed out by their holder in parliamentary just as they were in agricultural lots.

Since the fall of the Stuarts, the country, or its ministers, had been too busy keeping the succession securely

in hand to give even a thought to parliamentary reform. Representation had long been established as a principle, but that the people should really be represented had not yet seriously occurred to anyone. The only authority represented by the new member for Midhurst was that of Lord Holland's guineas. At the time he can hardly have suspected more than his father the share that he was to take in correcting the very abuses that had placed him where he was. When the new House assembled in May, 1768, he stayed on in Italy, and it was not until the following November that he took his seat. It will now be necessary to make a brief survey of the political world in which he was to play so conspicuous, so brave, and so thankless a part.

CHAPTER II

England in 1768

I

THE ORIGINS OF THE HANOVERIAN SUCCESSION TO THE English throne are too remote from our present subject to detain us. Its immediate consequence was that the supporters of the settlement realized that it would take a generation or more of unremitting vigilance to overcome the very active elements of opposition, and accustom the national mind to its new allegiance. After the deposition of James II, Jacobite and Jesuit alike nursed pertinacious hopes that made desperate bids for realization in the risings of 1715 and 1745.

The reigns of the first two Georges afforded ministers unrestricted scope for the exercise of all the ingenuity that they could command. It often seemed beyond the wit of policy to keep any effective public sentiment in touch with monarchs who were so spectacularly foreign. George I could speak no English, and as Sir Robert Walpole could speak neither German nor French, conversations between the King of England and his first minister had to be carried on in Latin. George II learned the language of his adopted land, but never to speak it in anything but a rich guttural accent. Both kings, moreover, were undisguisedly indifferent to the national hopes and character of their somewhat bewildered subjects. Each looked upon his capital as a place of exile and, while exasperated secretaries attempted to explain af-

fairs of the British realm, mused with longing thoughts upon the happy Eden of Hanover.

After a time a mutual accommodation was devised. The king was to be allowed to support the claims of his German Electorate with the aid of British resources, and in consideration of the privilege would leave the government at home to the discretion of his ministers. Such was the arrangement by which George I and George II maintained the fiction of sovereignty. It led inevitably to much complaining. Disaffected opinion in the country could, with a tiresome show of reason, accuse ministers of suborning British wealth and arms in the interests of a fussy and insignificant German state; and the charge was a difficult one to meet. Supplies of men and funds to further their continental designs were looked upon by the first Georges as the paramount condition of their bargain not to meddle in home affairs of which they understood nothing, and they kept their ministers to the bond.

On the other hand, Walpole and his colleagues could insist to the opposition that the compact was the only practical means of preserving the constitution under the new dynasty. Not to indulge the king would be to provoke interference in domestic policy that would wreck the working of the state, and inflame public feeling beyond control against the Hanoverian settlement. The Jacobites and Jesuits were a little shy of declaring openly that there was nothing that they would like better, but a significant shrug of the shoulders could make their feelings plain. Such aspirations Walpole was determined at any cost to frustrate; and he continued in the face of all criticism to make every possible concession to his German masters.

The subsidy paid by England to Hanoverian ambi-

tions under the agreement was a heavy one; but Walpole could claim that on the whole his long term of office was, apart from tributary campaigns, a term of peace, and that the country, if it was denied the ardors of personal loyalty, was making very consoling advances in commercial prosperity. In many respects as shameless a minister as has ever ruled at Westminster, Walpole was stedfast in his refusal to open the gates one inch to the Stuart or Romish intrigues, against which they had been closed at so great a cost, and in this he proved a long-sighted patriotism worthy of a finer spirit. His policy once determined, he clung to it with patience and ability; and left it to time to soften the personal antipathies that for over forty years alienated the house of Hanover from the English people. In this, too, his discretion was justified.

Democracy, with its attendant principles of adult suffrage and a genuine representation of the people, was an idea that in the times of which we write had but a nebulous habitation in a few speculative minds. The theories of popular rights and the liberty of the subject, for which the Puritan revolution stood, had, it is true, never receded wholly from the national consciousness; and the governing classes, from the sovereign himself to the doorkeeper, could never wholly forget the conditions on which Charles II had been restored to his throne.

After Cromwell, every Englishman knew that, however elusive a blessing freedom still might be, it was one to which his title had been irrevocably proved, and one to which he might hope some day yet to attain in actual experience. The great folk at Westminster, it seemed, continued to take little notice of his real needs and welfare, but they were, he felt with growing conviction, at least aware of his existence. A little more patience, and

perhaps they would do something about it. In the meantime, the great folk might honestly urge that they had no time for these considerations. Ever since the revolt of the Commons against the arbitrary kingship of Charles I, government had been kept busily employed in weathering one state crisis after another, and in such circumstances even the most liberal of ministers can pay little attention to progressive political measures.

The consequence was that although there were in name two great opposing political parties, neither had anything that could properly be dignified by the name of a policy. The chief concern of ministers was to improvise expedients to meet immediate and, as they considered them, imperative needs. The chief concern of the opposition was, since abstract principles were not in question, to discredit the government as far as possible by personal innuendo and insult. The Whigs were responsible for the Hanoverian succession, and for a time Jacobite and Catholic elements gave to Toryism some distinctive character. But as the eighteenth century approached its noon, the majority of the Tories themselves were as little anxious as the Whigs for a return to the Stuarts or an accommodation with Rome. A few malcontents nursed their grievances for a final and fatal demonstration in the year forty-five, but long before that time government and opposition alike were loyal in temper to the Hanoverian court.

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that during the first half of the century the principal difference between the Whigs and the Tories was that the Whigs were in office while the Tories coveted it, and that if the positions had been reversed the Tories, once their Jacobite passions had subsided, would have employed power in all essential respects as it was employed by the Whigs. When

Walpole retired in 1742, the government was still nominally Whig, but it fell into chaos and dishonor for fourteen years until it was rescued by the elder Pitt, who so far as he belonged to the tradition of either party belonged to that of Walpole's. But so confused had one become with the other, so little, indeed, for many years had they been in any vital sense distinct, that the historian* can truly observe of Pitt that "it is a misuse of the terms Whig and Tory to rank [him] with either of those parties."

There was very soon to be a distinction sharp enough, and it was one to which Charles James Fox was to give much of its memorable character. But until the accession of George III, the idea of political party as we know it in our modern state, that is to say political party inspired by democratic influences, had not been developed. At that date, 1760, the governing classes had been engaged for exactly a hundred years in deciding who the King of England should be. At length they had reached an agreement on this question, and the coming generations were to dispute two others: what the King of England should be, and what precisely was the status of his subjects, in all grades of society, and in the practical enjoyments and responsibilities of daily life. The first of these may today be taken as answered; the second is still in debate.

2

When on October 25, 1760, George II fell down dead in Kensington Palace at the age of seventy-seven, a thrill of expectation went through the English people. Hardly within living memory had there been a king to whom they had had the smallest opportunity of showing attach-

*W. B. Donne.

ment, and a long-starved national sentiment was hungry for expression. It was, in the occasions that immediately followed, not disappointed.

The young Prince of Wales was then twenty-two years old. His father had died in 1751 after a lifetime of disgraceful wrangling with the king, and had left his widow, Augusta of Saxe-Gotha, to supervise the education of the new heir to the throne, with the assistance of Lord Bute, whose constant presence at Carlton House was turned to most unlikely uses by the scandalmongers. The boy's tutelage was conducted with the narrowest severity, and an intellect of rather less than average dimensions was afforded no opportunity of expansion. Among his tutors were men of some talent, but they were intimidated by Augusta's pedantic ceremony, and the young prince was admitted to nothing of liberal learning. His personal movements were controlled with exemplary zeal, and when he succeeded his grandfather to the throne he was as little acquainted with the world of men in which he was to take so eminent a place as he was with the lessons and the achievements of the past.

The first weeks of his reign were spent in fantastic disputes about precedence and etiquette, and on these points he had been drilled to a nicety, but when questions arose demanding knowledge and insight, the poor young king's mind was pathetically at a loss. He was aware of it, and himself lamented that he had been so little blessed with profitable instruction. In the absence of this, he had but one resource with which to meet his difficulties, the obstinate courage of his race. He employed it unsparingly, with what results we shall see.

But while his naturally pedestrian mind had been encouraged in prejudice and ignorance, George's character had a good deal of native excellence that, combined with

any degree of understanding, might have made him a genuinely popular and powerful monarch. At his accession, the people knew hardly anything of him. He had been kept in seclusion, and allowed to take no share in the duties or amenities of public life. But there was a lively hope that the new king might at least prove himself to be English in tastes and interests.

His great-grandfather had never troubled to conceal his regrets that the six months of each year that he spent in Germany were not twelve, and his brave and choleric little grandfather, who had distinguished himself with Marlborough at Oudenarde, used to chatter in German while his English chaplains were preaching, and always kept eight hundred horses, ready-groomed against his arrival, in the stables at Herrenhausen. The new king had never been out of England. The people were on tiptoe. Who knew but that they might get something more palatable than sauerkraut for their money at last?

George made a splendid opening. When the draft of his first speech from the throne was submitted to him, he inserted with his own hands the words, "Born and educated in this country, I glory in the name of Briton." The phrase went like wildfire. "What a lustre does it cast upon the name of Briton when you, Sir, are pleased to esteem it among your glories." So the Lords, and the Commons, not to be outdone, acknowledged "with the liveliest sentiments of duty, gratitude, and exultation of mind, these most affecting and animating words."

The people were delighted. Society observed, with Horace Walpole, that "the young King has all the appearance of being amiable. There is a great grace to temper much dignity, and extreme good nature, which breaks out on all occasions." The venders of ballads along the pavements of Whitehall and Cheapside dis-

pensed a new turn of loyalty in their wares. Everyone was heartily glad, the king being dead, to cry, "Long live the king."

This early promise was in many important respects fulfilled. The manners of the new king were very obliging. He moved with easy condescension in any company, and formed habits that did not strain flattery. He took to farming with some enthusiasm, and, as Mr. Ralph Robinson, contributed little notes to an agricultural paper. When the band played for him of an evening, he always rose at the end of the program and took his hat off and said, "Thank you, gentlemen," and he would call for "Rule Britannia" or "Britons Strike Home."

On his rambles round Windsor he would drop in at any cottage that took his fancy, and gossip about pigs or the price of shoe-leather. If not handsome, he was a considerable figure of a man, with a frank laugh and a firm hand. He was a good horseman, not afraid of walking, fond of the theater with a preference for side-splitting farces, and not above a chaffing match in public. On one of his Windsor expeditions he found the tenant of a cottage roasting a goose on a string. He observed that it seemed to be rather an unsatisfactory method, and before going contrived to leave five guineas on the dresser in a screw of paper on which he had scribbled, "To buy a jack."

Such stories of the king's personal kindness are common, and there is no reason either to doubt their authenticity or to suppose that they had their origins in an eye for public effect. George just liked being agreeable to nobodies, and indulged his fancy. He was, moreover, something of a wit. A dealer from whom he had just bought a horse, handed the king a pedigree; George glanced at

it, and returned it to the dealer, remarking that it would serve as well for the next animal he sold. An unsatisfactory master of staghounds waiting on the king to inquire when the hounds should be turned out, he was answered, "I cannot exactly tell, but I can inform you that your lordship was turned out about an hour ago."

In an unenlightened way George was a patron of the arts. Without discrimination, he recognized that they ought to be encouraged. He founded the Royal Academy, with Reynolds as president, but preferred the paintings of Benjamin West. He was civil to men of letters, and thought James Beattie a great poet. He must be a cynic indeed who is not charmed by the exchange of courtesies with Johnson. The famous interview took place when the king was just under thirty, and the doctor twice his age. Johnson, in reply to a question whether he was then writing anything, said he thought he had told the world all he knew. "I should have thought so too," said the king, "if you had not written so well."

Johnson, in telling his friends of this, observed, "No man could have paid a handsomer compliment; and it was fit for a King to pay. It was decisive." Reynolds asked him whether he had thanked the king. "No, sir. When the King had said it, it was to be so. It was not for me to bandy civilities with my Sovereign." The king remarked that he could wish that someone equal to the work would undertake to write the literary biography of the country; Johnson took the hint, and proceeded to the "Lives of the Poets."

"Sir," he said afterwards, "they may talk of the King as they will, but he is the finest gentleman I have ever seen"; and again, "his manners are those of as fine a gentleman as we may suppose Louis the Fourteenth or Charles the Second." When, shortly after the meeting,

the king's attention was drawn to certain skeptical writers of the day, he expressed a wish that "Johnson would mount his dray-horse and ride over them."

George also took an interest in the advancement of science, and subscribed generously to the Royal Society. It is true that his prejudices sometimes interfered with his zeal for truth. Benjamin Franklin having declared for the superiority of lightning conductors with sharp ends, the king, much out of humor with everything American, requested the President of the Royal Society to pronounce officially in favor of knobs; but that gentleman humbly submitted that he was unable to reverse the order of nature. The king's genuine love of music was sometimes affected in the same way. He had an insatiable appetite for Handel's oratorios, but on one occasion soon after the American war had broken out, when during a performance of "Alexander's Feast" they came to the lines—

> The princes applaud with furious joy,
> And the King seized a flambeau with zeal to destroy—

his Britannic Majesty rolled his score up into a truncheon, and leaping to his feet flourished it above his head exclaiming, "Bravo, bravo!" and insisted on the passage being repeated.

But music was a delight that remained with him to the last. There are few more pathetic pictures in history than that of George in his madness and old age being surprised by the queen while he was singing a hymn and accompanying himself on the harpsichord. He finished the hymn, and knelt down to pray for his family and the nation, ending with a desire that God would let him be mad no longer. He then burst into tears, and all was dark again, and he had nothing but the harpsichord left.

3

As a young king, however, George had other qualities to recommend him to his people, beyond his friendliness, and anxiety to foster right and pleasant things, and public enthusiasm. His private life set an example that an age accustomed to reckless waste and profligacy in the fashionable world found not a little astonishing. Personal virtue in a king had not at all been expected, and the common people were strangely impressed when it was so singularly displayed, while society found itself looking uncomfortably down its nose.

The king's manifestly genuine piety affected different people differently, but it could escape the observation of no one. The Defender of the Faith no longer gossiped or snored in church; no sermon was too long, and courtiers were quickly brought to understand that lifting up the heart to Thee was no occasion for levity. One restless gentleman who was afflicted by tedium received a rap on the head from the royal hymn-book and a request that he would not fidget. Soon after the accession, a chaplain, preaching such compliments at the king's head as he supposed would advance him toward a bishopric, was much disconcerted at the end of the service to be told by the king that he came to church to hear God praised, not himself.

Further, the habits of George's household were almost sensationally decorous. In 1761 he married Charlotte Sophia of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, after an idyl with Lady Sarah Lennox that greatly alarmed his family. The royal couple settled at once into a domestic routine that was the despair of lords and ladies in waiting, but that viewed at a distance greatly edified the people. The king

himself, having risen at seven in the morning, rode, attended to private business, ate, gave audiences, listened to the band, visited the nursery, received ministers, changed his clothes, took stock of the cellars, checked the steward's additions, wrote memoranda to the departments, and played backgammon, at precisely stated hours.

Both he and the queen could be lavish in public benefactions, and he even went so far as to bestow a pension on the Young Pretender, who used it to console a middle-aged exile with tipsy amours. But in the domestic circle George and Charlotte promoted economy to an extent that was extremely dispiriting to the household. The only indulgence that the queen allowed herself was a daily ounce or so of snuff, for which she had a passion, and in the technique of which she was an adept.

The king generally dined alone, his favorite dish being a leg of mutton with caper sauce, followed by a cheese-cake, and perhaps a slice of the cherry pie that was ordered to be on his table every day of the year. He took a little wine, usually diluted in water. Of this frugal fare he partook very sparingly, chiefly, it is suggested, because he had been warned that any excess would make him as fat as his uncle, the Duke of Cumberland, who was hardly less celebrated for his obesity than for the ferocity of Culloden.

The breakfast of the young princes and princesses was limited to a dish of porridge, and the maids of honor had to follow the royal example of going supperless to bed, until they got so low in their minds about it that the lord steward carried their complaint to the king. His majesty regretted that what was good enough for himself and the queen was not good enough for them, but, while the discipline of the household could not be openly relaxed, he would make the young women an additional

allowance such as would "enable them to provide themselves with moderate suppers for the future."

In the patronage of art, so long as it was in some sense an official duty, George could be generous enough, and he is said to have bought two pictures a year for thirty years from West, at an average of five hundred pounds apiece; but then everyone spoke so highly of Mr. West, and when the king condescended to small reputations, he was all for a bargain. Richard Wilson having painted a landscape by command for the royal collection, the king, on asking the price and being told that it was a hundred guineas, exclaimed that it was a daub and the dearest picture he ever saw and would they please let Mr. Wilson know as much. Young Opie was put into a flutter of excitement by a summons to the palace and a request that he would take with him a picture that had attracted the king's notice at a dealer's. George said it was well enough and that he would keep it, but he could, he was sorry to say, not afford to pay more than ten guineas for it.*

The king asked Reynolds to write an interlude for home performance, and sent him five pounds for the work. Sir Joshua returned the money, doubtless to the royal satisfaction, and on receiving a request later for a similar piece, regretted that he was otherwise engaged. On being taxed with the impropriety of a king selling stock from his farms at public auction, George justified himself by saying that "anybody might accept a sheep and neglect it; but no one would buy one who did not mean to take care of it."

But parsimony within doors, though it made life in the palace harassing to robuster appetites, did not spoil

* It is fair to add that he put other work in Opie's way.

the general effect of temperance and regularity, and it was an effect very pleasing to popular sentiment, emphasized as it was by the nice friendly way the king and queen had with them. People like to know that a sovereign who could shake with laughing at the buffooneries of Foote, and could stand in the street among the citizens of Worcester to give three cheers for their new bridge, could also write to a prince of the church reproving him for turning the episcopal palace into a scene of "levities and vain dissipations," and begging that they be immediately suppressed so that there may be no further occasion for marks of the royal displeasure—and "may God take your grace into his Almighty protection."

They liked also to know that a queen who, paying a call on Mrs. Garrick, found her getting Mr. Garrick's dinner ready, and sat down to peel the onions with her, could say to a court favorite who had rashly promised to get permission for a notorious baggage to visit the royal drawing-room, "Tell her that you did not dare to ask me." Queen Charlotte must have been an extremely difficult person about the house, sententious and exacting, but she was perfectly placed in the picture of domestic piety that her husband presented to the world. Benjamin Franklin made a shrewd point when he noted in his journal: "If George the Third had had a bad private character, and John Wilkes a good one, the latter might have turned the former out of his kingdom."

For it was unquestionably the reputation of his private virtues that saved George III from the full consequences of his public follies. The progress of these follies belongs to the development of Fox's story, but it will be well here to glance at their origin. The inadequacy of George's education as boy and youth was not due to any conviction in his mother that a future king had no need of being

educated at all. On the contrary, she believed, with a tenacity that nothing could shake, that preparation for kingship should consist of an ever-narrowing concentration on one fixed idea, and with that idea the young prince's mind was relentlessly assailed.

He was, he was told, going to be king, and a king's first and last obligation was to rule. However people, parliament, and ministers might adjust themselves in the state, they were all alike to be directed by the king's personal will and judgment. The conception of policy was the king's prerogative, and it was the business of ministers to convey his wishes to parliament, whose privilege it was to preserve in themselves and in their constituents a mood of docile obedience.

The choice of ways to this end was of no consequence. So long as the king's authority was undisputed, it did not matter how it was imposed. Royal menaces would go far when persuasion failed, and the king had always favors to bestow or withhold. Augusta of Saxe-Gotha, too, believed that every man had his price, and it would always be within the king's, that is to say the nation's, means to pay it. In any case, determination to rule must never be relaxed. In that alone was security of the king's honor.

Far from finding this hourly repetition tiresome, the young George found it increasingly apt to his own inclinations, and by the time he succeeded to the throne, his whole being was impregnated with the doctrine. Two things, however, he and his mentors had overlooked. The theory of limited monarchy that had been established by the Puritan revolution, and was the seed of the constitutional monarchy that we now know, could not in any significant sense be said to have been tested since the succession of George I. The special conditions under

which that sovereign and his son were Kings of England gave their reigns the character not so much of a monarchy, limited or otherwise, as of an interregnum.

In 1760 the new king and his ministers alike were approaching the problems of government pledged to a system of which they had no practical knowledge. But that the system was one that had been made part of English polity a hundred years ago was a circumstance of which ministers and parliament and the people were all aware, even though it had been suspended by an accident of succession for nearly two generations. The consciousness was not yet very active, but it was there, and nothing had been able to destroy it.

This consideration was one of which George and the advisers of his youth had taken no account whatever, and that was their chief miscalculation. He ascended the throne with ideas that differed in no essential respect from those that inspired and destroyed Charles I. The other error into which his mother and her troop of obsequious pedagogues had fallen was not to see that, even assuming it to be possible for a king to impose an autocratic rule on England at that time of day, he must have some foundations of knowledge and experience upon which to work in the designing of policy. And of these he had not been allowed to acquire a vestige. George III came to the throne deeply committed in his mind to an obsolete theory of kingship, and wholly unequipped with the education and insight by which alone it could at any time have been successfully practiced.

4

That was not an end of the difficulties. The king was obstinate and ignorant, but he was also profoundly in

earnest, and he had a tireless capacity for industry. He sincerely believed that his, the king's, rule would be beneficent because he knew best; and he knew nothing. His goodness stopped short at personal piety and the charming amiabilities of Farmer George. As soon as questions arose demanding vision and imagination he was lost. In almost every large issue of policy his judgment was foolish, bigoted, cruel.

So long as the people were the cottagers of Windsor or the shopkeepers of Worcester, the king met them with an unaffected good fellowship; but when they were a formidable power moving in opposition to his own political caprice and infatuated self-sufficiency, they were "wicked and disappointed men" whose "outrageous licentiousness" must be ruthlessly suppressed. His methods of control knew no scruple. The doctrine of any means to the end made corruption a sacred obligation, and the king's "golden pills" were dispensed with genial and shameless candor.

It would be difficult to find a more decisive contrast than that afforded by the private and the public characters of George III. In the one we have a kindly and considerate gentleman, a little dull it may be, but warm-hearted, honest, and full of generous impulses. In the other there appears a figure of stupid and habitual arrogance, capable of any spite and petty cunning, grossly incapable of understanding or the attempt to understand anything beyond the shuffling of offices or the deft placing of a bribe, suspicious of ability, jealous even of his own fawning shadows, and intolerant to the point of insanity of the very name of independence. A far better, a far braver, and a far more attractive man than Charles I, he rivals even that monarch in squalid insufficiency as a king.

Add to all this the industry, that suffocating industry. He blundered through the lucid years of his reign with a thoroughness approaching genius. He worked early and late, no detail of state business escaping his supervision. Every crown appointment, every movement of troops, every debate in the Houses, every speech reported from the hustings, every echo of popular feeling, was placed under his minute personal scrutiny.

A continuous procession of messengers hurried through the gates of the royal residence on their way to ministers, each bearing a note or a sheaf of notes written in the king's hand. These notes, meticulously dated—"Queen's House, January 3rd, 1775, 3 min. pt. 9 P.M.," "Kew, July 31st, 1779, 59 min. pt. 7 A.M."—often written in tumbling haste, and crowded with figures, names, and urgent messages on every conceivable topic, represent an intensive application that almost defies belief. Lord North alone received some eight hundred of them. Here was an energy for mischief that not the stoutest opposition could quell, and George III for something like half a century did his very effective worst. As this story proceeds, it is this public misdirection that will chiefly claim our notice. Its effect should be softened by recollection of the private virtues that were its complement.

Such then, in briefest outline, was the condition of English political life when Charles Fox was passing from childhood to youth, and such the character of the king under whose influence his own career was shaped. For it was in antagonism to everything that George III represented that his genius was developed, and his memory assured as one of the most intrepid servants that our state has known.

CHAPTER III

Wilkes and the Middlesex Election

1763–1770

I

WHEN FOX TOOK HIS SEAT IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS at the age of twenty, George III had been eight years on the throne. During that time the king's ministries had undergone a series of kaleidoscopic changes. The elder Pitt, whom he had found in power on his accession, resigned a year later when he was not allowed to declare war on Spain for interfering in his settlement with France after a struggle in the conduct of which he had shown his most splendid ability.

He had been succeeded in office by Lord Bute, the king's favorite and a man who raised the name of Scot to the highest pitch of odium in the English mind. Bute in turn had made way for George Grenville, whose administration Macaulay considered to be the worst that had been known for over a hundred years; and Grenville had made way for the Rockingham Whigs, who had the good fortune to find their eulogist in Edmund Burke. Lord Rockingham, whose cabinet was notable for integrity but weak in parliamentary talent, used every art of persuasion to induce Pitt to join him; and it has been marked by Pitt's admirers to his discredit that he refused.

In 1766, Rockingham lost control of his subordinates and the king again turned to Pitt himself, with

whose influence he was no longer able to dispense, much as he distrusted it. Pitt was seriously ill, but at length he yielded to royal pressure, and consented to act on condition that he should not reassume the burden of leadership in the lower House. He went to the Lords as Earl of Chatham, and formed the Grafton cabinet. It was now that the campaign of Wilkes against the king's government began to acquire its full momentum, and when, at the time of Fox's entry into parliament, Chatham was forced to resign by continued ill health, the Grafton administration stumbled on with no sense of direction, its shiftless incapacity assailed at every turn by the scathing periods of Junius, whose first letter was dated January 21, 1769. For our purpose, the chief thing to note in the Grafton ministry is that in 1767 it was joined by Frederick, Lord North, as chancellor of the exchequer and leader of the House of Commons.*

During this prolonged exhibition of musical chairs, three important things had happened. In the first place the old Whig ascendency had come to an end. After the Rockingham interlude, a stray seat or two in the cabinet was all that was left of power to the party that had held office against all onsets since Hanover came to England. Secondly, the ascendency that this country had reached under Pitt, whose war cabinet had inherited great resources from Walpole, had been destroyed by a succession of ministers who were either incompetent or unprincipled and usually both.

Parliament under Grafton was an easy mark for the diatribes of Wilkes and Junius. The charge that government was bankrupt in honor and sense was not only made in the best demagogic style, but had the powerful recom-

* North had entered parliament in 1754, and had already held junior official rank.

KING GEORGE III
From the portrait by J. Zoffany

mendation of being true. Neither at home nor—what was soon to be even more significant—in the colonies were the officers of the crown regarded with the smallest trace of confidence. And thirdly, the crown itself had lost all the respect of which George's personal amiability had made so fair a promise.

Faithful to his resolution to keep government exclusively in his own hands, he had for eight years intrigued in the formation of every cabinet, and had attempted to dictate the policy of every minister. Men of wit and integrity found that to serve under him was impossible. In an extremity he could turn to Pitt, but in an extremity only and with open reluctance. His will was not to be influenced or questioned, but executed, and he surrounded himself with advisers who knew their places better than to advise. What he wanted nobody knew, himself as little as any. His inherited obsession that the king must rule was the extent of his mental processes. How he was to rule and to what end were questions that he never asked himself. Let people do as he told them, and the function of kingship was sufficiently fulfilled. With this determination, he never for a moment allowed his mind contact with the idea that the king could act only through ministers directly responsible to a parliament that was in turn responsible to the constituencies. He was, indeed, not aware of the gradual formation of such an idea that was taking place in English political life. The only kind of responsibility that he recognized was everybody's responsibility to him.

In this mood he admitted to his inner counsels a select group of men who might or might not enjoy ministerial rank at the time, and who came to be known as the King's Friends. They formed a kind of secret service whose business it was to distribute the golden pills

and influence votes in the House by any other means, fair or foul. They enjoyed the king's favor and his bounty, and were asked for implicit obedience in return. If any member of the cabinet showed signs of having opinions of his own, a pretext was found for removing him, so that the amenities of the elect might be undisturbed. It was George's tragedy, and his country's, that he really believed this evasion of reality to be a strong and prudent exercise of kingship.

From the King's Friends the king heard nothing that was not reassuring to this conviction, and he was deaf to other voices. The first leader of this cabal had been Bute, and it was whispered that after he had resigned he still held secret communications with the king. Even Chatham talked darkly of a power behind the throne. When Charles Fox entered parliament, George III had done everything to lend point to the distinction that John Wilson Croker made fifty years later between government by party and government by faction.

2

John Wilkes, born in 1727 of a good middle-class family, had been well educated, was allowed even by his bitterest enemies to be one of the wittiest men of his time, and seems to have found a sallow complexion and a conspicuous squint no hindrance in a youthful career of gallantry. His early ambition to be admitted into the childish and blasphemous fraternity notorious as the Monks of Medmenham was frustrated by the claims of superior profligacy advanced by the fourth Lord Sandwich, with whom he competed for election. His resentment against that nobleman and Sir Francis Dashwood, the founder of the society, was not appeased by the suc-

cess of an exploit that diverted the town. Wilkes contrived to let a baboon loose upon one of the orgiastic rites at Medmenham that was being conducted in darkness, and had the satisfaction of throwing his victims into hysterics at the apparition of what their befuddled wits took to be the devil. Wilkes continued to nurse his grievance, as Sandwich and Dashwood were presently to learn.

Until he was twenty-seven, Wilkes employed himself as a fashionable rake, chiefly at the expense of a rich but otherwise unattractive wife several years his senior, whom he made no pretense of liking, but whose money he used lavishly to entertain his dissolute friends. But in spite of his early depravities, Wilkes had more sober and serious qualities that allied to his wit were destined to make him an extremely formidable figure in national affairs. In 1754 he became high sheriff of Buckinghamshire, and three years later was returned to parliament as member for Aylesbury, after having unsuccessfully contested Berwick-upon-Tweed. He at once declared himself a supporter of the elder Pitt.

On being reelected in 1761, he found immediate opportunity for his remarkable gift of destructive criticism. The friends of Pitt were outraged by their champion's deposition in favor of Bute, and their anger was reflected in popular feeling as soon as the paltry character of the new ministry exhibited itself. Bute himself was blamed for the wholesale dismissal of government servants in all ranks who owed their places to the old order; it was said that he turned out everyone who had risen by favor of the Whigs, with the exception of the king. The elevation of a Scotsman to the chief office of state was, moreover, obnoxious and even alarming to a public that had not forgotten the events of forty-five. In

the general ferment of suspicion, the minister's relations with the queen mother did not escape irresponsible but damaging comment. Bute had hardly a friend in the country.

If he had been a man of any ability and character, or with enough sense to attach himself to men who had these, he might have made some front against personal unpopularity. But he was incompetent and unscrupulous, and his associates in office were worthy of their leader. Everywhere signs accumulated of those "Present Discontents" that Edmund Burke was to anatomize so memorably in 1770. The king and his minister, startled at length even out of their complacency, opened a corrective campaign, among their propagandists being Tobias Smollett, who edited a weekly journal called "The Briton." Wilkes's hour had come. His genuine indignation as a patriot and the political friend of Pitt was aggravated by two circumstances of a more personal nature. Finding the expenses of a seat in parliament beyond his means, he had applied for diplomatic employment, and had been refused, as he was convinced, at the instigation of Bute. Further, Bute's chancellor of the exchequer was none other than the Francis Dashwood against whom Wilkes bore an ancient grudge.

Dashwood in office was a figure too contemptible to be even funny, though his budgets were openly derided by the House. He had not the most elementary ideas as to how to perform his duties, or even as to what his duties were. He infuriated the West of England by putting a tax on cider, a beverage little esteemed by a chancellor who drank with the fixed and single purpose of getting drunk. Wilkes took up the challenge of the court pamphleteers with the double zest of public duty and private animosity, and when the first number of The

North Briton appeared in 1762 rounds of applause greeted the mingled strains of passion and invective. A popular champion had arisen, and the king and his friends were filled with angry misgivings.

Not that George for a moment lost confidence in himself. Mutiny might be tiresome, but it could always be quelled. As number followed number of The North Briton it became clear that something must be done; the difficulty was to decide what. When forty-four numbers had been issued, Bute resigned; it was thought that Grenville, his successor, would be more favorably inclined toward Pitt, and in this belief Wilkes suspended publication. In a few weeks it was found that this hope was not to be realized, and the speech from the throne, stigmatized by Pitt as a tissue of ineptitude and bad faith, inflamed Wilkes's temper to fever pitch. On April 23, 1763, he sent out the famous "No. 45," and the government proceeded to disgrace itself in raptures of imbecility.

The offending article was outspoken, but the terms applied to it were wildly extravagant. Wilkes told his readers that the king's speech had "always been considered by the legislature and the public at large as the speech of the minister." The present speech, he added, was "the most abandoned instance of ministerial effrontery ever attempted to be imposed on mankind," confessing himself in doubt as to whether to bestow his sympathy chiefly on the sovereign who was forced to lend it his name or the nation to whom it was addressed, and lamenting that "a prince of so many great and amiable qualities" should be betrayed into association with "the most odious measures and the most unjustifiable public declarations."

If that kind of thing were treated today as it was

then, there would be a general exodus from the editorial offices of London to the jails. George gave orders that the transgressor was to be punished with the utmost possible rigor. It was not for his instruments to reason why, but to devise a means. They proceeded to this task with a gross irregularity that failed of its object and brought the crown and themselves into open contempt. Without waiting for an answer from the law officers whom they had made a pretense of consulting, they issued a general warrant * for the apprehension of "the authors, printers, and publishers of a seditious and treasonable paper entitled The North Briton," and for the seizure of any papers found in their possession.

This flagrant outrage on public decency was executed, and Wilkes was brought before two secretaries of state for examination. He refused to answer their questions, and considered himself fortunate that he was at least in a country where torture was no longer permitted. He intimated that he as much as any man respected the king, but that in his opinion the king's advisers were a disgrace to the name of government. He thereupon entered his plea of privilege as a member of parliament. It was disallowed, and Wilkes was committed to the Tower.

Popular sentiment at once rose to fury. It was supported by the opinion of large numbers of responsible citizens who knew the ministers had grossly exceeded their prerogative. There was a general feeling that the persecution of Wilkes was dictated by the king; and the king was now to find that the contest was going to be no easy one. The Court of Common Pleas, before which Wilkes was summoned from the Tower, admitted his plea of privilege, and ordered his release. He was taken to his house by a cheering mob, and at night the town blazed with bonfires in his honor.

* I.e., a warrant without specification of persons by name.

Wilkes took legal advice, and wrote to Secretaries Halifax and Egremont, demanding the return of his papers, which he quite properly accused them of stealing. They replied that his letter was "indecent and scurrilous," and told him that in due course such papers as did not constitute proof of his guilt would be returned to him. Wilkes became more indecent and scurrilous still, and he instituted proceedings for false imprisonment against the authors of the general warrant. The government brought up all their forces; the chancellor of the exchequer undertook on behalf of the king to pay all costs in which the much aggrieved secretaries might be involved; Lord Halifax secured a written pledge from the Privy Seal that whatever happened he should not be held personally responsible for damages; and the defendants entered court in cheerful anticipation of a verdict that should teach cross-eyed agitators what it meant to incur sovereign displeasure.

To their consternation they heard a judge of the High Court declare, "upon the maturest consideration, I am bold to say that this warrant is illegal." He added that if a superior authority should reverse his judgment, he would kiss a rod that he should nevertheless regard as "a rod of iron for the chastisement of the people of Great Britain."

It is not too much to say that in these words Chief Justice Pratt saved George III from a perilous step toward the fatal path that had been trodden by Charles I. There is no telling to what length at that moment legal sanction of the king's arbitrary spleen might have driven the temper of the country. But his Majesty showed no signs of gratitude. He was, indeed, enraged to hear that the plaintiff had been awarded damages against a number of his obedient servants, Lord Halifax being mulcted in no less than four thousand pounds. The costs that had

been so happily guaranteed amounted to a hundred thousand. Wilkes retired to Paris, sharing with Mr. Justice Pratt the excited homage of a nation.

3

But the king was by no means prepared to let bad alone, and for seven years he and his ministers used every ingenuity to make it worse. Wilkes returned for the reassembling of parliament on November 15, 1763, when, as we have read, the boy Fox heard Lord North rise to denounce "a false, scandalous, and seditious libel, containing expressions of the most unexampled insolence and contumely towards his Majesty, the grossest aspersions upon both Houses of Parliament, and the most audacious defiance of the authority of the whole Legislature." A stout minority, led by Pitt, opposed the motion, but it was carried by a House that had been carefully doped by the King's Friends, and an order was issued for "No. 45" to be burned by the common hangman.

When that officer attempted to perform his duty, he was prevented by a mob that now attended Wilkes's comings and goings in a state of frenzy. The government thereupon had another inspiration. Wilkes was found to be the publisher of a versified "Essay on Woman," an obscene pamphlet of the kind that is described as "curious" in the booksellers' catalogues. He had, in fact, printed thirteen copies only at a private press, doubtless for the edification of old Medmenham friends. The copies were never sent out, and whatever we may think of this kind of salacity, the decision to make it a pretext for government action was grotesque. The proceedings, with an incomparable sense of fitness, were entrusted to Lord Sandwich, now a secretary of state.

Distinguished from nearly all his colleagues by ministerial ability, and a man of some engaging qualities, Sandwich was nevertheless notable even in that age as a corrupter of public and private morals. He was enchanted by the prospect of squaring accounts with Wilkes in the matter of the baboon. An obliging chaplain was employed to steal a copy of the "Essay" from Wilkes's papers, and Sandwich read the poem to the House of Lords, under protest as he submitted, but resolved not to spare his own delicacy in bringing the publisher of this outrage to book.* The audacity of the performance made a sensation in the town. "The Beggar's Opera" was being played at the time, and at the line "But that Jemmy Twitcher should peach, I own surprises me," the audience cried, "Sandwich! Sandwich!" and Jemmy Twitcher he was till the end of his days.

But the king's purpose was served. In January, 1764, Wilkes was expelled from the House in terms of Lord North's motion, and in February he was found guilty in the Court of King's Bench of indecent publication. He had again gone to Paris; in his absence, sentence was postponed, and he was outlawed. For a time he disappeared from the scene of action, but his name had become a popular cry that accompanied a continual fusillade against the king's pretensions. Liberty has appeared in few odder guises than the person of John Wilkes, but perhaps in none more effective.

In March, 1768, he risked arrest by returning to London, hoping that ministerial changes and the lapse of time would have softened the temper of authority. He petitioned for a royal pardon. Wilkes's taste for martyrdom had, in fact, been satisfied, and a conciliatory word

* The author is said to have been Thomas Potter, son of an Archbishop of Canterbury.

at this time might easily have silenced him forever. The King's Friends were sick of harvesting the dead-sea fruits of 1763, and advised their master to an act of clemency. But George was inflexible. At this moment a general election took place. As we have seen, Charles Fox was returned for Midhurst, and Wilkes offered himself to the electors of the City of London. He polled heavily, but was defeated, and the next day he appeared as candidate for the County of Middlesex. After a campaign of intense excitement, he was elected by a majority of over four hundred. The king stiffened in his determination, and the order went forth that the new member was not to be allowed to take his seat in the House.

Before parliament assembled, Wilkes had managed to get his outlawry removed on a technical point, and appeared before the King's Bench to hear the suspended judgment of the court. He was sentenced to imprisonment for twenty-two months, a fine of one thousand pounds, and a term of seven years' probation on leaving jail. The mob tried to rescue him as he was being conveyed from the court, and failing in this consoled itself with the assurance that he would be liberated as soon as parliament met.

But May 10, the date fixed for that event, arrived, and Wilkes did not appear. A great crowd gathered at the prison gates, demanding his release. The king had anticipated the move, and had a Highland regiment in readiness. A riot followed, several persons were wounded, and one killed. The magistrate who had given the order to fire, and the soldier who had obeyed so successfully were tried for murder; the one was acquitted, and the other dismissed from the service with a pension.

Wilkes in prison got hold of a copy of the letter conveying the royal thanks to the Highlanders for their

zeal, and had it published as showing "how long the horrid massacre in St. George's Fields had been planned and determined upon . . . and how long a hellish project can be brooded over by some infernal spirits without one moment's remorse." In February, 1769, after ten months of confinement, he was summoned to the bar of the Commons to answer for this offense. He denounced the letter as a "bloody Scroll," and by 219 votes to 137 was expelled from the House.

A fortnight later Middlesex again returned him unopposed. The government submitted that his expulsion still stood after reelection, and carried their point. Yet again the Middlesex electors declared that Wilkes, and none but Wilkes, should be their member, and again the election was declared void. Seeing that this farce was to be enacted for a fourth time, the government put forward a candidate of its own, a bullying colonel by name Henry Luttrell. And among his most ardent supporters in the booths were the sons of Lord Holland, dutifully employing their youthful eloquence at the paternal bidding. It was not notably effective. The poll was declared, and read: Wilkes, 1,143, Luttrell, 296. It is to be hoped that Messrs. Whittaker and Roche did not spend much time or money on this election, as the former gentleman polled five votes and the latter none.

Unwearied in docility, the House resolved that "Henry Luttrell Esquire, is duly elected a Knight of the shire to serve in present Parliament for the county of Middlesex." The quarrel now entered a phase of unrestrained violence. Every other topic was banished from the public mind. Horace Walpole told of a man who began a letter, "I take the Wilkes-and-Liberty to assure you . . ." The House debated little else for some months. In January, 1770, Chatham in the Lords raised

his voice against Luttrell's presence in the lower House in words of crushing moderation, but his protest attracted only 36 votes against 203. This was on the ninth of the month, and on the same day Charles James Fox rose in the Commons to address the House.

CHAPTER IV

Fox the Tory

1770–1774

I

THE MEMBER FOR MIDHURST HAD SPOKEN TWICE OR thrice before, but reports of the speeches have not survived. On April 14, 1769, he and his brother Stephen are both said to have supported the motion for Wilkes's expulsion, Horace Walpole noting that "Charles Fox, with infinite superiority in parts, was not inferior to his brother in insolence." On May 8 he spoke on the Middlesex election, and his precocity took the House. Walpole again notes, "Charles Fox, not yet twenty-one, answered Burke with great quickness and parts, but with confidence equally premature."

Another observer wrote at the time: "Mr. Charles Fox . . . made a great figure in the debate last night. . . . He spoke with great spirit . . . and entered very deeply into the question on constitutional principles."

Lord Holland was fondly delighted: "I am told Charles Fox spoke extremely well. It was all off-hand, all argumentative, in reply to Mr. Burke and Mr. Wedderburn, and excessively well indeed. I hear it spoke of by everybody as a most extraordinary thing, and I am, you see, not a little pleased with it"; and in a yet more positive strain, "I am told that few in parliament ever spoke better than Charles did on Tuesday."

Parental raptures duly discounted, it is clear that the

young orator was a valuable recruit for any party. And so far his vote had been punctually recorded, as became the son of Henry Fox, against all this nonsense about liberty and popular rights. The King's Friends, even the king himself, had an eye open for material so promising, and now on January 9, 1770, a somewhat disquieting note suggested that the promise might not be so secure.

A member accused the House of having betrayed its trust in seating Mr. Luttrell. He was told in heated retort that if he had his deserts he would find himself in the Tower. Burke took up the running, said the present ministry was a public offense, and asked the Speaker if he did not feel the Chair shake under him. Another member submitted that the clause in the address "thanking the King for his approbation of the conduct of the House, would be construed without doors that His Majesty approved of the resolution of the House in respect to the Middlesex Election." Whereupon, Mr. Fox joining in the debate, official expectations were a little startled by what he said.

He first took leave to remind honorable members that loss of temper persuaded nobody. Anxious critics excused the pertness as a youthful gallantry, and waited. Fox proceeded: "The expression in the Address did not allude to any particular measures of Parliament, nor to every measure; as no one could suppose His Majesty approved of every resolution taken by the House, but only of the general tenor of their actions." Having spoken for not more than three minutes in all, he sat down.

But what was this about the king not approving? Not approve of the injurious Wilkes being put in his proper place? Everyone knew that the king approved to the full limits of royal cordiality. What, then, was Charles up to? Was he by any chance insinuating that there could

be two opinions about Wilkes even in the house of Holland? That if the king did approve, then the approval was in questionable taste? These things could hardly be, and yet the recruit had given a strange turn to his phrases. He must be watched.

On February 19, he allayed suspicion by scoring heavily in debate against the learned Wedderburn, whose Toryism had momentarily succumbed to the blandishments of Wilkes. As Fox on a legal point of law took the wind out of that legal luminary's sail, the House, says Walpole, roared with applause. Lord North had recently succeeded Grafton as prime minister,* and was already docketing the kingly missives of which he was to form so extensive a collection. The debate on February 19 went well for authority, and on the 20th, George signified in the usual way his pleasure in the account of last night's division; and could Lord North find it convenient to call that evening and tell him more about it?

The particulars furnished by the minister no doubt included flattering reference to the highly satisfactory behavior of Lord Holland's son. Something ought to be done to gratify so likely a supporter. Moreover, Lord Holland himself had not been too handsomely treated, having waited personally on the king to ask for a promotion in the peerage, only to be mortified by a curt intimation that it would not be convenient at the moment. Decidedly it was a case for the royal consideration. Eight days later Charles was appointed a junior lord of the admiralty, within a month of his twenty-first birthday.

In those days the elevation of a boy to such rank signified little or nothing. Any cadet of a great political

* North himself as first lord of the treasury never accepted this designation. But the term was already in use. The king's letter calling him to the highest office was dated January 23, 1770.

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family who showed modest signs of talent might gather these fruits of influence and connection while he was hardly out of his nonage, and many a career failed signally to advance beyond its first unmerited brilliance. At the time of his appointment in 1770, Charles Fox had done more than most young men of his age to flatter the expectations of a court party that had enough enterprise to know that it could do with a spice of informed and witty eloquence. An ever-growing enthusiasm for the tables had not monopolized his time. On a second continental tour late in 1769 he had augmented his social prestige by yet more splendid losses, but he had continued to read and mark and learn. Easy in manner and pointed in allusion, his maiden efforts in the House had not been merely precocious, and his triumph over Wedderburn, relatively a veteran at the game, had been a genuine one. His record, slight as it was, gave more color than was common to early distinction, but his appointment in itself was neither evidence of unusual ability already shown nor an earnest of what was to come.

Least of all an earnest of what was to come. Any junior lord of the admiralty at twenty-one might very well have followed precedent into nonentity by the time he was forty; while this particular junior lord, if all that was said of him was true, might have been expected to number himself in the fulness of time among the most illustrious and obliging of the King's Friends. Instead, he came to honors of which his first successes tell us nothing, and they were achieved by a steady opposition to everything that friendship for the king involved. Many great careers have looked back on origins of a strangely unfamiliar aspect, but few with more wistful irony than that in which Charles Fox now advanced a notable step with his patent of February 28, 1770.

2

Lord North was a brave man according to his somewhat clouded lights, and he was no fool. But he had neither character nor talents to make him a conspicuous figure in the crowded and highly competitive galleries of history. He was, however, first minister during twelve critical years of Charles Fox's life, he was more exactly the political complement of George's sovereignty than any other man of the age, and he was a chief actor in more than one dramatic episode of our story. His contacts with Fox were now to be close and momentous, and we may here take brief note of his composition.

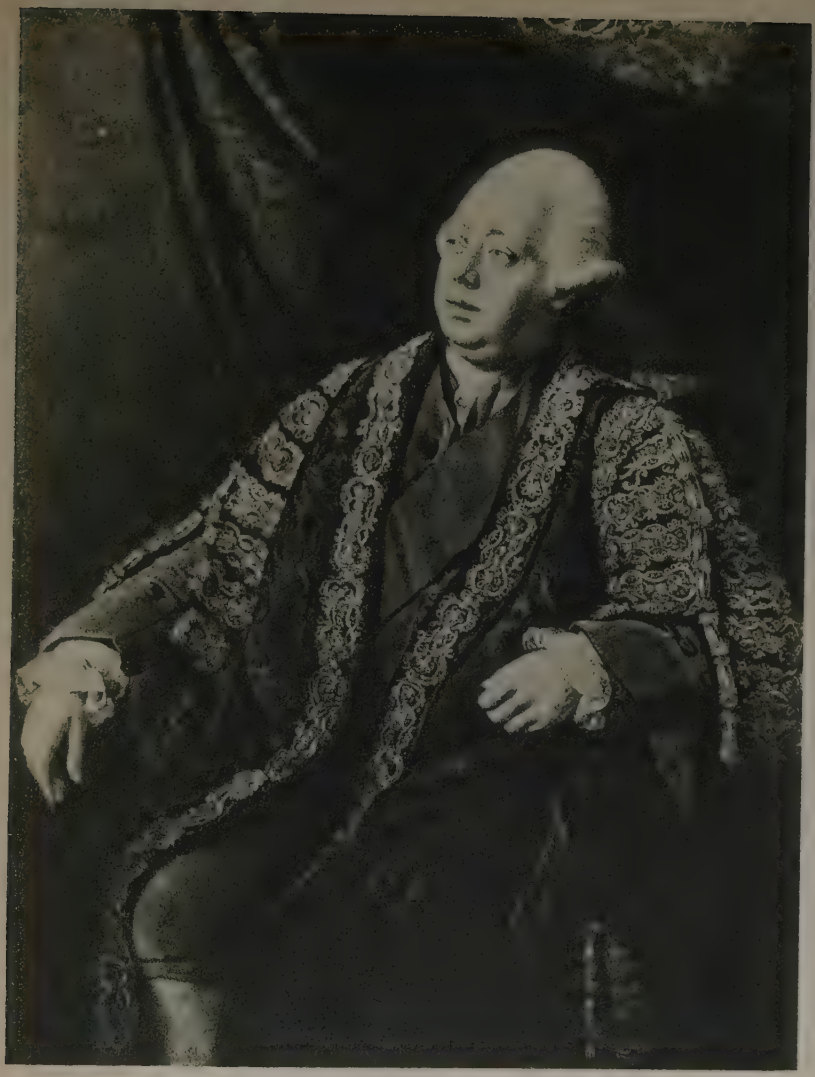
Long experience of Chatham had steadily matured the king's distaste for ministers with wills of their own. That opinionated patriot having now resigned, as it was devoutly to be hoped, for the last time, George looked round for a successor who should be more accommodating. His need was for a sound, unenterprising man of some executive ability, willing to learn at the only fount of wisdom, never presuming to instruct, and likely to stay solidly in one place for as long as he was wanted. These qualifications appeared in Frederick North to a nicety. The son and heir of Francis, first Earl of Guilford, he had the necessary recommendation of rank, and his official service to date had been admirably regular and obliging. In later years he had no reason to modify his boast that he had never supported a popular measure in his life, and already at the age of thirty-eight he had shown an imperturbable disregard for democratic pretensions.

The king, who declared that, God willing, his reign should be one of no change, found in North a minister

able to dispense a steady flow of reactionary doctrine from the treasury bench, and gifted with a faculty for instant and profound slumber if any member should be so hardy as to rise with proposals of reform. As such hardiness was exceedingly prevalent during his term of office, North had ample opportunity for sleep, of which he assiduously availed himself.

Even so, he often heard more than was good for him, and it is said that he was not always what he seemed. Burke could pause in a peroration to hope that "the government, like Lazarus, is not dead but sleepeth," without effect, but proceeding to a classic instance was tripped in his stride by a somnolent voice correcting a false quantity. Another zealot exclaiming that even as ruin threatened him this worthless minister was asleep, the victim murmured that he wished to God he was. An agreeable turn of pleasantry, indeed, was always at the call of a personality much given to sedate and heavy habits. An acquaintance asking who that extremely plain woman was, North replied, "My wife, sir." With a desperate feint his interrogator explained that she was by no means the lady he meant, but the one on her right. "That, sir," continued North, "is my daughter, and we are said to be three of the ugliest people in London."

He was sincerely modest of his own abilities, and when after long service the king dropped him, not without complaints, he could submit with dignity and truth that he had frequently asked permission to resign on the plea of his own insufficiency. But unenlightened though he was as a statesman, he had considerable parliamentary gifts. His finance, governed always by a praiseworthy ambition to pay off debts, was able if not imaginative; and both Fox and Gibbon paid convincing tribute to his mastery in debate. Six years senior to the king, he was called



FREDERICK NORTH
Second Earl of Guilford
From the portrait by N. Dance

to office in the belief that he would do nothing unforeseen, and that he would administer policy without attempting to shape or guide it.

Events proved that George knew his man. North never during his long ministry offended the royal presence with a constructive idea, and he took his orders as obediently as the royal coachman. Lord North will do this or Lord North will do that—such was the constant form and burden of the notes that fluttered in unending profusion on to the minister's table, and no less constant were expressions of satisfaction at hearing that Lord North had duly done it.

It must be added that exacting as were the king's official demands, he treated his docile first lord with consideration, applauding his firmness in the House, blandly cheering him on the renewed effort, solicitous for his convenience, so long as it did not interfere with his own, and even careful to prescribe abstinence and water for a chill. A greater man would have stood none of it, but North was pliant, grateful, diligent, and if he went so far as to substitute a bottle of claret for the water, it was the extent of his emancipation.

North's success as a minister was achieved on these terms. He knew very well what bargain he was making in 1770, and for twelve years he kept it. That he was a valuable leader of the country nobody could pretend, or that he was a leader at all; but that he faithfully stood by his compact with his master, deaf to all seductions, his most unsparing critics could not deny. His personal honor was never assailed, and while by the nature of the case he lent himself readily enough to the king's lavish practice of oiling palms, his own conduct in the matter of official perquisites was blameless.

If George's system had been a tolerable one, no man

could have been more perfectly fitted to bring it credit than the first lord. But it is to his identification with a system politically intolerable and discreditable that North's failure in history is due. He was not made for other and nobler courses, and in a sense he was lucky in his circumstances. Differently placed, he would hardly have risen from obscurity, but in the character of George III he found a chance in a thousand, and took it. It can at least be said of him that for twelve years he patiently applied himself to a bad job with a great deal more skill and decency than it deserved.

At the time when Charles Fox joined the government, the king and his Friends had had ten years in which to make themselves notorious. How successfully they had employed their time was now (1770) proclaimed to the world in Burke's tremendous denunciation, "Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents." The great object of policy in these years, he declared, had been "to secure to the Court the unlimited and uncontrolled use of its own private favour." The king's party had operated against the ministry, and intrigue supported by the privy purse had been steadily employed to secure for these operations the corrupt acquiescence of parliament. Under this control by faction a paralysis had crept into the national life. The Whigs, to whom the prosperity of forty years and the security of the throne itself were due, had been thrown out in circumstances almost of disgrace; ministers had to choose between their own conscience and the king's patronage, "fearful of attempting and incapable of executing, any useful plan of domestic arrangement, or of foreign politics"; the very right of election had been challenged; British policy had been brought into derision "in those nations that a while ago trembled at the power of our arms, whilst they looked up with confidence to the

equity, firmness and candour which shone in all our negotiations"; the case of Wilkes had made our administration of justice contemptible, since no one could be so simple as to suppose that he had been punished "for the indecency of his publications or the impiety of his ransacked cabinet"; all confidence between the crown and the people had been destroyed; and the principle of commonweal had fallen utterly into disrepute.

To answer these charges was impossible, but that they made the smallest impression on the king is nowhere evident. He had a firm hold on the reins, and Whig spleen could be left to consume itself. But less Olympian minds may well have had misgivings. No man was more unlikely than North to be intimidated by a rhetorical pamphlet, but as he read Burke's indictment even he must have suspected that opposition was going to be more formidable than it was the royal pleasure to believe. On the Duke of Grafton's resignation, Lady Holland had every reason for writing, "I hope Lord North has courage and resolution." And then with charming partiality she adds: "Charles being connected with him pleases me mightily. I have found a very high opinion of his lordship, and my Charles will, I dare say, inspire him with courage." So that in Holland House, at least, hope still ran high.

3

For a time Charles was all that inherited tradition could desire. Wilkes continued to fascinate the government into grotesque attitudes. His sentence was due to expire in April, 1770, though by this time his personal success had lost some of its extravagance. On the day before Fox's appointment to the admiralty, Horace Walpole was writing to a friend: "What Wilkes may do at his enlarge-

ment in April I don't know, but his star is certainly much dimmed."

Nevertheless, Wilkes had raised issues that had now gone far beyond personal considerations. Several provincial cities had forwarded protests to the crown in the name of popular rights, and during 1770 the lord mayor and aldermen of London joined in with a twice renewed remonstrance, greatly to the king's indignation. On November 3, George spoke from the throne to the third deputation thus: "As I have seen no reason to alter the opinions expressed in my Answer to your former Address on this subject, I cannot comply with the prayer of your Petition"; which petition went so far as to declare that a venal majority in the House of Commons by excluding an elected member had "done a deed more ruinous in its consequences than the levying of ship-money by Charles the First."

On his release from prison Wilkes had again caught the public fancy, and by a majority of eleven hundred in a poll of fifteen hundred votes had been elected to a London aldermancy for the ward of Farringdon Without. He had, moreover, closely identified himself with the agitation that had recently been started for the freedom of the press in reporting parliamentary debates. The election was regarded by the king as an outrage, and the agitation as another abuse of royal toleration by a graceless and insatiable people. He wrote several letters to North. In one he was delighted to note from the latest figures that the two senior aldermen seemed secure of nomination for shrievalty, which would show that Wilkes had been supported in his misconduct only by a small and irresponsible part of the livery.

The voting took a sudden turn for the bad, and when the result was declared it was lamentably found that the

disreputable alderman from Farringdon Without had become a sheriff of the City of London. The king pointed out to North also the urgent desirability of putting a stop to "this strange and lawless method of publishing debates in the papers," suggesting that the "miscreants" might more suitably be brought before the House of Lords than before a lower court. "The Lords can fine as well as imprison, and . . . have broader shoulders to support any odium that this salutary measure may occasion in the minds of the vulgar."

Even North was baffled by this ingenious recommendation, but after a protracted fuss inside the House and out, he succeeded in getting an order for certain printers to appear not before the Lords but before the Commons. Wilkes at once persuaded his fellow magistrates to make a bold stroke for his favorite goddess, and the "miscreants" found sanctuary in the City. Thereupon, a royal proclamation was issued offering fifty pounds apiece for their arrest, and a zealous artizan had the misfortune to bring one of them to a court where Wilkes himself happened to be sitting.

The prisoner was discharged, and the crestfallen captor committed for assault. At the same time another summons to the House was resisted by a printer who pleaded privilege as a liveryman. The Speaker's messenger attempted to execute his orders, and a street brawl ensued. Wilkes was on the watch, and a constable appeared with instructions to take both parties in custody to the Mansion House. There, before the lord mayor and Alderman Oliver, the scene in Wilkes's court was reenacted. The printer was set at liberty, and the messenger committed for illegal arrest.

The king was infuriated, and stampeded his unhappy Friends into quicksands of futility. Wilkes was

summoned to the bar of the House, Brass Crosby and Oliver to their seats as members. Wilkes retorted that he too was a member, and refused to appear unless he was cited as such. Discretion at this point being the inevitable part of valor, the king exclaimed to North that "as to Wilkes he is below the notice of the House"; and the next day he "could have wished that Wilkes had not been ordered before the House, for he must be in a jail the next term if not given new life by some punishment inflicted upon him, which will bring him new supplies."

Still a day later, there is evident relief in the tone of "the apparent intention of not examining Wilkes meets thoroughly with my opinion." George, in fact, realized at long last that the only way of dealing effectively with the apostle of liberty was to leave him alone; and Chatham in retirement learned with grim satisfaction from a correspondent that his Majesty had declared that he would "have nothing more to do with that devil Wilkes."

The summons had been served, however, and merely to withdraw it would be too ignominious. Some device had to be found for the occasion. When Wilkes failed to appear, the order was renewed with a provision that it should be obeyed on a stipulated date, until the day after which the House thereupon adjourned, and the government supposed that it had saved its face.

But the lord mayor was another matter. Here the king was peremptory, and North was told, "the authority of the House of Commons is totally annihilated if it is not in an exemplary manner supported tomorrow by instantly committing the Lord Mayor and Alderman Oliver to the Tower." Two days later the behavior of the majority has proved to be highly satisfactory, and would it not be prudent to conduct the lord mayor to his penance by water rather than along the more public thoroughfares? His

Worship, however, had other views, and contrived to have himself conveyed in triumph from Palace Yard to Temple Bar. He is said to have arrived at the Tower magnificently drunk. After six weeks of regal state in captivity, during which they received the great Whigs in audience and were voted civic thanks and defrayment of all their expenses by the common council, Crosby and Oliver were released, and the City was afforded another opportunity of indulging its hereditary taste for bonfires. The king once more had succeeded in making himself a public scorn and laughing-stock.

Throughout these events Fox more than justified parental and ministerial hopes. His powers of debate matured with impressive rapidity, and they were employed without stint in the service of his patrons. With brilliant mutations he insisted in every emergency that it was the duty of parliament to preserve the constitution, even in defiance of popular will. By the constitution he meant nothing more than the king's policy as expressed in a corrupt vote, but the casuistry did not disturb him. Speaking on the liberty of the press, he could say that the issue was raised only by such men as themselves hoped to profit by a license for their subversive utterance. "Why, then, should we hesitate to put a negative upon a question which sprung from such a low source? From dirt it came, to dirt let it return." He could in the same breath talk of the "misled multitude," and declare that he could "never acknowledge for the voice of the nation what is not echoed by the majority of this House."

On the motion for committing the lord mayor to the Tower he argued explicitly for the supreme discretion of parliament as against "the imaginary infallibility of the people." He blandly called on Charles I in witness of the tragic folly of "unlimited indulgence of the popu-

lar wish." He did not suspect the people of a design against their own happiness, but he greatly suspected their capacity for knowing what their happiness truly was. "For these reasons, sir, I pay no regard whatever to the voice of the people; it is our duty to do what is proper, without considering what is agreeable; their business is to choose us; it is ours to act constitutionally and to maintain the independance of Parliament. . . . Therefore, as we are chosen to defend order, I am for sending those magistrates to the Tower who have attempted to destroy it." And then, on a soaring note, he ended, "I will not be a rebel to my King, my Country, or my own heart, for the loudest huzza of an inconsiderate multitude."

Such was the astonishing prelude to a career of heroic liberalism. Wilkes was a "profligate libeller of their lawful sovereign," the advocates of the free press a "miserable faction," and the petitioners for electoral rights an "infamous gang of blackmailing lampooners." And Fox could excel even these performances. When a brave minority attacked government corruption in the case of Sir James Lowther, Charles took up the defense with a high-flown gusto that may have been good lobbying but does not in print conceal a shameless insincerity.

Lowther, afterwards first Earl of Lonsdale, and as contemptible a character as ever offended history, had entered a suit against the Duke of Portland under what was known as the Nullum Tempus Act, whereby he sought to show that certain estates that had been granted, quite honorably, by William III to the Portland family, could still be recovered as crown property and newly vested. The legal processes involved need not be examined, but Lowther's action was notoriously inspired by unblushing rapacity. He had actually persuaded a gov-

ernment that was in his obligation, that his view was tenable, and secured an order for tenancy at a quit-rent of thirteen shillings and fourpence a year.

The duke at length succeeded in bringing the matter before the House with the object of getting a governing clause in the obnoxious act repealed. No honest mind could for a moment entertain doubts as to the rights of the case, and the motion was opposed by the ministry on unequivocal grounds of interest. Fox was astonished, was amazed, when he saw men of character, men of ability, men of knowledge, men of reputed integrity, promoting a bill so bad, so violent, so lawless, so monstrous. He implored them for their own honor to drop it. And a great deal more rubbish about our constitution, our liberty, our laws. As he spoke, he must have known perfectly well that there was not a word of good law, or sound sense, or common decency, in what he was saying, but he took a hesitant House with him. Earlier readings had been lost to the government, but after Charles's effort on the tape a losing cause was retrieved by a majority of ten. And Horace Walpole in Arlington Street noted on the occasion that in Charles Fox was discovered a phenomenon of the age.*

4

The latest of these speeches, that on the lord mayor's committal, was made on March 25, 1771. So far, the junior lord had turned out to be an extremely creditable appointment, and his chief could enjoy royal felicitations on having made so shrewd a choice, if indeed the king allowed that the choice was not his own. But undercur-

* Lowther, it is satisfactory to note, did not eventually secure the spoils.

rents were beginning to move in Charles's mind, observed by none, and as yet hardly perceptible to himself. Already he was on terms of some intimacy with Burke, and although officially opposed to him, was greatly attracted by the qualities of mind that shone with so bright a candor through the swelling periods of the "Discontents."

The impulse that governed Fox at first in his public life was an unreckoning zest for conflict. So long as he found opportunity for the exercise of his abounding and fluent energies, he was at the outset little concerned as to the direction that they took, and he followed his father's lead as a matter of course. Little by little, by intuition rather than by deliberation, he found himself asking whether he might not after all employ his gifts with as much delight in furtherance of principles about which he could feel some conviction. His political ambition had been stimulated by early success, and there may be something in the view that his breach with North was occasioned partly by some grievance in respect of advancement. If we prefer to think otherwise, we are supported by the fact that for thirty years he was the inflexible spirit of a minority that would make no concessions as the price of office. For a man so sensible of his own power, so convinced that given proper scope it could redeem his country from error, it was a stern test; and he survived it. We hardly strain faith in believing that the transformation that was now being effected was an instance of profound political conversion.

Early in 1772, a bill was being drafted to forbid any marriage in the royal family without the sanction of the crown. Two of the king's brothers, the dukes of Cumberland and of Gloucester, had married commoners, and these shocks to the dignity of his family had thrown George into a dangerous state of excitement. His first

mental breakdown had occurred in 1765, and he was not prepared to face this kind of domestic anarchy.*

By what degrees Fox came to the decision, we cannot tell, but he resolved to oppose the bill when it came before the House. At the same time he formed the opinion that it would be improper to do so while holding office, and determined to resign. On February 6, a petition was presented in the Commons, praying in behalf of certain dissenting clergy for relief from subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles. The motion was introduced by Sir William Meredith, a stanch member of the opposition, who had been quixotic enough to save North and Fox from severe handling by the mob that had stormed round Brass Crosby's coach on the way to the Tower. It was resisted by the government, and Fox voted in his place; but he stated that he did so with reservations, and hoped that steps might be taken to meet with liberality a plea that was clearly urged by conscience.

It is significant that on this occasion Burke spoke and voted in the same sense. It is less significant, but worth noting, that Charles was said to be below his standard in the debate, and with sufficient reason. Walpole tells us: "He had sat up playing hazard at Almack's, from Tuesday evening 4th, till five in the afternoon of Wednesday 5th. An hour before he had recovered twelve thousand pounds that he had lost, and by dinner, which was at five o'clock, he had ended losing eleven thousand pounds. On the Thursday he spoke in this debate; went to dinner at past eleven at night; from thence to White's,

* The Duke of Cumberland married no other than a sister of Luttrell, a circumstance that was exquisitely to the taste of Junius: "The forced, unnatural union of Luttrell and Middlesex was an omen of another unnatural union, by which indefensible infamy is attached to the House of Brunswick. If one of those acts was virtuous and honourable, the best of princes, I thank God, is happily rewarded for it by the other."

where he drank till seven the next morning; thence to Almack's, where he won six thousand pounds; and between three and four in the afternoon he set out for Newmarket."

About this time Lord Holland was told of a report that his son was going to be married. He replied that he was glad to hear there was a prospect of Charles going to bed for one night at least.

Tory gossip as to the lapse in its young hero's form, however, while offering this explanation, may very well have had its real origin in the matter rather than the manner of the speech. Young heroes of the caucus were not expected to concede points to adversaries in this way. Heresies about black and white tended to drift off into indeterminate grays that were wholly beyond official comprehension. Worse was to follow, and on the 17th, Fox for the first time openly declared his hand, attacking North on a point of order in a debate on church property, and voting against the ministry. Three days later he sent in his resignation.

North's hands at the moment were embarrassingly full. The Marriage Bill was about to be introduced, and the king was taking it very heavily indeed. On the day of Fox's resignation the bill was brought to the notice of parliament in strains of highly formidable solemnity: "G. R. His Majesty, being desirous, from paternal affection to his own family and anxious concern for the future welfare of his people, and the honour and dignity of the Crown . . . recommends to both Houses of Parliament to take into their serious consideration . . ."

The first readings were not wholly satisfactory, and on February 26 the king complained that he had not been edified by the debate in the Lords that day. Would Lord North please see to it that his forces were in an unexcep-

tionable order? "I do expect every nerve to be strained to carry the Bill through both Houses with a becoming firmness, for it is not a question that immediately relates to Administration, but personally to myself; therefore I have a right to expect a hearty support from everyone in my service, and [the words demand italics] *shall remember defaulters.*" The defection of the brilliant young pleader could not, indeed, have been timed more disagreeably, and North in genuine and somewhat undignified alarm asked him whether there was not perhaps any little consideration to himself or his family that might have been overlooked in the press of ministerial duties. Charles was much obliged, but there was nothing.

On March 9 a member moved in the Commons "that it does not appear that [a clause in the Marriage Bill] is founded in law, or warranted by the opinion of the Judges of England." In the long and violent debate which, according to the official report, followed, there was a majestic exchange of compliments between Fox and his late chief. It gave him great pain, said the demure backslider, to differ from a minister whose general conduct he so much approved; "a minister who, with unexampled resolution has stood forth in the most critical and dangerous moment to save his country from that anarchy and confusion into which it was about to be plunged by factions and ill-designing men." North in replying lamented that "a gentleman of whose abilities and integrity" he had so high an opinion differed from him, and that the "manly, open, and spirited manner in which that gentleman" had, from the first, communicated to him his objections to the Bill, and his intentions of opposing it, had "increased instead of lessening the esteem" in which he held him.

This was all very engaging, but the flow of affability buttered no parsnips. For all its adornment, there was

no hair-splitting in Fox's speech. The minister for whom he protested so deep a respect had "by some unaccountable fatality become the promoter of a Bill which seems big with mischief, and likely to bring upon the country that very anarchy and confusion from which his former conduct has rescued it"; and for himself he should oppose the measure with determination at every step. The gage was thrown, and although "nothing could be more pleasant" to his Majesty than Lord North's account of the proceedings that had resulted in a substantial government majority, subsequent debates on the bill left neither the king nor his ministers in any doubt as to the quality of the support that had been withdrawn. Fox kept his word, and teased the government at every turn, being "universally allowed to have seized the just point of the argument throughout, with most amazing rapidity and clearness."

The bill was put through, but only under a sparkling cascade of argument that bereft the promoters of everything but their votes. "Never," says Walpole, "was an act passed *against* which so much, and *for* which so little, was said." And the occasion gave the king and his Friends an ample foretaste of what might be expected from the member for Midhurst if he should become seriously established in opposition.

But Fox was not precipitate in his movements. He had struck an effective note of independence, and he had, it must have seemed, forfeited any hope of further royal favor in consequence; but his mind was not yet prepared wholly to discard inherited and acquired traditions. Henry Fox, with all his faults, was too supple a personality to lose all hold at a word upon a son whom he had so fondly indulged and who had so much natural affection in his character as Charles. Lord Holland, indeed, was on no flattering terms with an official world from

which he had retired with a grievance, and on the Royal Marriage Bill and that other measure of which we are about to hear, was inclined by his own romance and the episode of Lady Sarah Lennox to share his son's views. But any decided step toward a Whiggism that placed public principle above private interest was likely to receive little encouragement from the old paymaster. Further, a young minister, whatever his convictions, does not easily throw over the allurements of connection with a powerful court. Charles was never likely to run easily in Tory harness again, but his final enfranchisement was not yet.

5

In April (still 1772) he asked leave in the House to introduce a bill to repeal a Marriage Act of 1753 that annulled marriages made without consent of parents, and had been violently attacked by Henry Fox in his time. North had promised not to oppose this request, but changed his mind under pressure at the last moment, and spoke against it. In a small House, Fox carried his motion by a majority of one; and although the bill itself was handsomely defeated six weeks later, the episode was not flattering to ministerial prestige, and North played furtively with the possibility of gathering the vagrant back to the fold.

Fox was out of the government, but he kept himself aloof from any formal alliance with the opposition. He was casting about for his natural political moorings, and in the meantime reserved the right of independent action. Through 1772 he showed a growing preference for liberal measures, attempting to redress the barbarities of the laws relating to illegitimacy, divorce, and abduction, but he did not range himself methodically against the min-

istry either in debate or in the lobbies. Toward the end of the year North was sufficiently encouraged by this temperance to negotiate afresh. Charles at the moment had not lately been in collision with authority, and was disposed to try his hand again in office. The value placed upon his support by the king and his agents is indicated by the complete reconstruction of the cabinet that was undertaken in order that he might be given a place. On December 20 ("40 min. pt. 6 P.M.") the king wrote to North, "I have no objection to Mr. C. Fox's vacating his seat tomorrow," and Charles rejoined the government with a place on the treasury board at sixteen hundred pounds a year.

Lord Holland was delighted at this return to conformity. North, only less scared of the young man's talents when they were on his payroll than when they were fancy-free, was not so much delighted as rather painfully relieved. He was rapidly to be disillusioned even in this mild mood of satisfaction. During his interlude of party detachment Charles had been uncertain of his own purposes, and there is reason to suppose that he went back to North, vaguely assured that with an occasional protest he would after all be able to accommodate himself to the policy of his first choice. But under the touch of renewed restraint, all his hesitant liberalism at once roused into a life from which it was never afterwards to relapse; and within a few weeks of the readjustment it was plain that whatever his future might be he was lost to Toryism.

In February, 1773, the House again debated subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles. Fox spoke against the government, ridiculing a system that made children of twelve profess an understanding of the "sublime mysteries of religion" when matriculating at the universities. He called upon the House to consider the enormity of "our

youth being trained solemnly to attest and subscribe to the truth of a string of propositions, all of which they are as entirely ignorant of as they are of the face of the country said to be in the moon." The House, by a vote of a hundred and fifty-nine to sixty-seven decided that it would do nothing of the sort, the account of which "handsome majority"—as North was informed by a letter dated the same day at 20 min. pt. 10 P.M.—gave the king "infinite satisfaction." For, said his Majesty, as a sincere friend of the Constitution he was a great enemy to any innovations, ecclesiastical or civil; "in this mixed Government, it is highly necessary to avoid novelties," and he really had no patience with people who seemed "to have no other object but to be altering every rule our ancestors have left us." And then, a tiresome fly in the solid amber of majority, "I think Mr. C. Fox would have acted more becomingly towards you and himself if he had absented himself from the House, for his conduct cannot be attributed to conscience, but to his aversion to all restraints." *

In May Charles took a lively part in the protracted debates on the motion laid before the House for investigating the conduct of Clive in India. In denouncing the great soldier as "the origin of all plunder, the source of all robbery," he was speaking neither for nor against the government, since the attack was led by Thurlow, the attorney-general, while Wedderburn, who had recovered from his reforming ardors and had become solicitor-general, managed the defense. North himself found the whole affair tedious, and slept heavily through the languors of a premature summer, in which younger members clamored for a division, fearing that the heat "would

* Sixty years later Palmerston was asking in the House, "What could be so absurd as to require a man to subscribe to the thirty-nine articles before you will allow him to cure you of a fever!" P. Guedalla, *Palmerston*, p. 185.

melt their rouge and wither their nosegays"—the nosegays of which Charles was said to affect the largest in town. Nor need we examine here the justice of the vote that left Clive exonerated in form but with a reputation by no means untarnished, in spite of the obvious rider that he had "rendered great and meritorious services to this country."

North and Fox finally voted together in the minority, but while Fox supported the motion that "the said Robert, Lord Clive, abused the powers with which he was entrusted, to the evil example of the servants of the public," with vigorous resolution, North did so with ill-concealed hesitancy. The king, far more positive as to "Lord Clive's rapine," could assure his minister that "your conduct has given the greatest satisfaction." No one, said George, esteemed Lord Clive's services more highly than he; but he had no taste for seeing some hundreds of thousands of pounds going in this way to the private enrichment of a servant when his own privy purse was so constantly in need of repair.

To North the case presented a different aspect. He was responsible for keeping an ample majority at the king's command in the House; and Clive had ten boroughs in his pocket. A quarter of a million might be an imposing sum, but even so it was no small thing to offend such a man. On the whole North thanked his luck that things had gone no worse. Clive at least had secured a very handsome benefit of the doubt, and the minister might hope that his own vote would be regarded as no more than a formality—he had been careful to drop a discreet word or two in the proper place to that end.

The unfortunate business, in fact, seemed to be dwindling into oblivion, when in June, during an Indian debate that had nothing to do with Clive personally, Fox

gratuitously reopened the question and so insulted the hero of Arcot and Plassey that North strode out of the House in a rage.* It says much for Clive's magnanimity, and for his discretion as between the minister and his subordinate, that when he left the country six months later for Italy in quest of health, he made over the control of his boroughs to North. But now in June no one could tell what he might do after this affront from the treasury bench. North was exasperated, not unreasonably. This agile impetuosity was the very devil, particularly on these hot evenings when confident slumber was so necessary. The minister was beginning actively to share his master's distaste for Mr. C. Fox.

6

Parliament that summer (1773) rose on July 1, and a week later Miller, the printer of Mansion House fame, was fined two thousand pounds for making so bold as to accuse Lord Sandwich of selling a place. On the 8th, North went to Oxford for his installation as chancellor, his election to which office nine months before had given the king "great pleasure . . . as it is a compliment to me, and a credit to that ancient seat of learning." The recess was even longer than was usual in days when gentlemen of the House expected to be away from town in time for the Mayfly, to see the birds well off the turnips before they returned, and to get a month over the shires at Christmas.

Not that this meant much respite for a minister of George III, as we discover in the records of this year. On June 8 the king wrote to North from Kew that until parliament was up he should continue coming to town of

* Clive was member for Shrewsbury from 1760 until he died by his own hand in 1774.

a Sunday, and after prorogation the messengers were kept busily trotting along the Westminster and Bushey roads. Lord North, faithful custodian of the royal patronage of learning, is to give the Polish savant Charles Godfrey Woide a hundred pounds towards a new edition of La Croze's Coptic Dictionary; he is to go forward with the act relative to gold coin, though the king must say that an allowance of six grains apiece for his grandfather's guineas seems too much; he will please attend at one tomorrow to bring more precise information as to an alleged French plot; he will note that Lord Suffolk "has undoubtedly rather too pressingly twice asked the Garter"; he will, it is to be hoped, be very firm in dealing with an obnoxious proposal to tax absentee Irish landlords; he will also keep a vigilant eye upon the court of aldermen; he will agree with us that "it is melancholy to find so little public virtue remaining in this country"; he will be gratified to know that domestic economies at Windsor are considerable, and that the kitchen furniture at Carlton House has been presented to the cooks in recognition of their services to the dowager princess, lately deceased; he will kindly inform his father, the aged Earl of Guilford, who has been appointed queen's treasurer, that he may ask for an audience after the levee tomorrow, "which will, I trust, be the means of giving him the least fatigue"; and when he sees the very detrimental Duke of Gloucester, who no doubt wants money, he will listen as much and say as little as possible.

In the meantime Charles rode, played a little tennis and cricket, read the Greeks, and kept within easy call of Almack's. His own finance was an inconsequent reflection of the public disorder. "They say the Bank is to issue five-pound notes: at present all trade is at a stop, and the confusion is extreme." And Walpole adds: "The

Maccaronis are at their *ne plus ultra:* Charles Fox is already as like Julius Cæsar, that he owes an hundred thousand pounds." Carlisle, with a devotion that perhaps does more credit to friendship than to Charles's scruples, insisted on sending in regular relief, and at least one other disciple followed his example.

There is a somewhat incoherent story at this time of Fox having been duped by a notorious impostor, who persuaded him that she could find a West Indian wife for him with a fortune of eighty thousand pounds. The lady, she said, preferred fair men, and would Mr. Fox consent to powder his eyebrows? Her charge for preliminary advice appears to have been half a guinea, with equitable provision in the event of business resulting. Smallpox intervened, however, to keep the heiress abed when she should have been presented to her needy suitor. The whole may be condemned as an improbable fiction, but it had some currency in the world of fashion, and at least suggests the straits to which Charles was commonly supposed to be driven at the time.

Always at his happiest when he could govern by orders to minister and council without interference, George had already in August expressed a hope that the reassembling of parliament might not be necessary before January; and it was not until the 13th of that month, 1774, that the House again met. The session opened quietly, North telling a rich member, who complained that there was not a banker in England who had not lost five hundred pounds by the regulation of the gold coinage, that he was glad the loss had fallen on those best able to bear it; India House engaging continued attention; and a general, who thought he ought to have had Lord Guilford's place, resigning in a sulk from others he already had. But the vacation had not chastened Fox's

temper, and he returned in a mood to make more trouble.

His opportunity was not long delayed. On the 26th he had a brush with North on an election petition, trifling, but enough to create a suitable atmosphere. A fortnight later an article in the Publick Advertiser alleging partiality in the Speaker on a land enclosure suit brought the printer Woodfall and the author John Horne, afterwards Horne Tooke, before the notice of the House.

The article, signed "Strike—and Hear," concluded: "All sorts of punishments, I know, are at the discretion of your employers; and according to their fancy or policy, they will, when they please, inflict it. But I shall think myself well rewarded, if I can only awaken from their lethargy some few honest members of the House of Commons, to watch over the wickedness which you are daily perpetrating under the pretence of form."

The forgotten issue need not be revived, but Fox adroitly turned the occasion to account by forcing North to lead the government in a proposal to commit Woodfall to prison, against the sense of the House that the proper course was to place him in charge of its own sergeant-at-arms, and so avoid further possible conflict with the magistrates. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that in this caprice Fox had no other object than to strain his relations with North to breaking point. The minister, convinced of the insecurity of his position, was finally reduced to the ridiculous expedient of voting for the motion that he had brought in, while saving the situation by instructing his friends to vote against it. This was on February 14.

This time North was roused to some purpose, and did not hide his feelings from the king, who wrote on the 16th: "I am greatly incensed at the presumption of

Charles Fox in obliging you to vote with him . . . but much approve of your action in making your friends vote in the majority; indeed, that young man has so thoroughly cast off every principle of common honour and honesty that he must become as contemptible as he is odious; and I hope you will let him know you are not insensible of his conduct towards you."

North was not slow to take his sovereign's advice. On the same day, the 16th, Fox rose to call attention to another libel in the Publick Advertiser, signed "South Briton," the victim this time being, in the speaker's words, no more material a figure than "the glorious Revolution of 1688." Charles's indignation on this abstract theme has an affected tone, but he had no difficulty in persuading the House to prosecute the printer of a sufficiently dull tirade, which did indeed go to the length of accusing "our governors since that period," of being "wicked examples of bribery, corruption, dissipation, gaming, and every species of wickedness that can be committed." On Fox's motion, the letter was declared without division to be "a false, scandalous, and traitorous libel on the Constitution of this Country," and the printer—Mr. Woodfall again—was fined the spectral sum of two hundred marks.

In those days there was point in Fox's distinction between licentiousness and legal liberty of the press, and there were undoubted abuses that he could attack without being suspected of reactionary zeal. But his attitude throughout these opening debates of the 1774 session was vexatious, though, as we have suggested, it may have been with an involved political purpose. He wanted, we surmise, to be rid of his connection with the court, and adopted this rather odd method of realizing his ambition.

Two points in his "glorious revolution" speech, however, deserve notice. Objection was made to punishing

this "poor despicable South Briton . . . after so many more pernicious libellers were permitted to walk at large," and the names of Shebbeare and Johnson were mentioned. Shebbeare was a notorious and insignificant Tory hack, who, like Johnson, had been pensioned. Fox intervened at once: "Sir, I cannot subscribe to the propriety of coupling Dr. Johnson and Dr. Shebbeare together. I should be very much against persecuting a man of great literary abilities, for any opinions which he might happen to drop in works not professedly political. . . . I must make an eternal distinction between the cases which he represents as the same. The peculiar opinions of men of great literary abilities, who have accidently dropped them, are not what I think ought to meet with persecution. To do so would be to injure the cause of literature, which is ever best encouraged under a free government."

That passage, emerging from a not very edifying context, is the one note sounded by Fox in these debates prophetic of the man that he was to be. Samuel Johnson himself heard the speech from the gallery, and he never forgot the compliment.

The other point for our notice is the concluding phrase of Charles's motion: ". . . libel upon the Constitution of this Country, and tending to alienate the affections of His Majesty's subjects from His Majesty and his Royal Family." Can it be that at the last moment he wondered whether after all . . . Perhaps not; in any case, he had gone too far. On February 24, 1774, he received a letter: "Sir: His Majesty has thought proper to order a new Commission of Treasury to be made out, in which I do not see your name.—North."

So that was an end of office, for eight years. Before him lay Burke, and freedom, and the American Revo-

lution. On January 18, Walpole had written in his diary: "This week came accounts of very riotous proceedings at Boston, where the mob broke into the ships that had brought teas, and threw about three hundred and forty chests into the sea." And on February 4 the king had written to North desiring him to consult with Lieutenant-General Gage "as to the mode of compelling Boston to submit to whatever may be thought necessary."

CHAPTER V

English Life and the American Colonies in 1775

I

THE FIRST FOUR YEARS OF FOX'S CAREER MATTER LITTLE in the interpretation of his political character. When he left office in 1774, he had displayed a brilliant talent, but without authority or depth of conviction. To ask for matured responsibility in a statesman at the age of twenty-five is to be unhumorously exacting. It is enough that, once he had broken with the Tory leaders, he regarded his early connection with them as an indiscretion, upon which there was no need to waste penitential tears. It would be too much to say that his parliamentary gifts had so far been put to merely frivolous uses, but in those early sessions we hear a skilful player tuning his instrument, rather than a prelude indicating what was to follow. Faction does not dignify itself in reproaching the fame of a great man with the caprices of intellectual adolescence.

His personal behavior to his chief is not quite so easily excused. In bringing the government, of which he was a member, into derision, he indulged the temper of an undergraduate "rag." To Fox's incipient liberalism, North must sometimes have been an exasperating leader, and it is fair to add that immediately Charles found himself at variance with authority on a serious political issue, he resigned. But, even so, he seems in those days more than once to have strained propriety to the extreme limit of high spirits. It must nevertheless be remembered that

party cohesion was not then the principle of administration that it has since become; that even a cabinet minister could dissociate himself publicly from his colleagues, and keep his place. Further, North conducted government not by party under control of the public will, but by faction under control of the king's ministers, whose opinion was rarely asked and never honored, and who, realizing that they might be dropped at any moment at the sovereign's pleasure, knew nothing of the ties of loyalty by which the cabinet system was later to be bound.

Charles Fox was now, in 1774, twenty-five years of age. In July of the same year, a lank, pale boy of fifteen returned to Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, having been nursed back to some health after a breakdown in his first term. As a child he had shown remarkable promise, beyond the usual blank verse tragedy, in this instance called "Laurentius, King of Clarinium." His mother, Lady Chatham, with a maternal partiality no less cordial than Lady Holland's, had written in 1772, "The fineness of William's mind makes him enjoy with the highest pleasure what would be above the reach of any other creature of his small age." Above all, under his father's incomparable direction, he was already a sedulous orator, trained in "sonorous elocution" by a daily recitation from Shakespeare or Milton, and expanding his vocabulary by translations at sight from the classics. Such accomplishments are, indeed, not uncommon in youths of fifteen, the distinction being that, while in most cases there is no advance beyond these early good intentions, William Pitt in ten years' time was to be prime minister of England.

In the meantime, another little boy had been no less the object of parental solicitude, but with far less promising results. On the day of Charles Fox's dismissal, the queen, who had now been married thirteen years, was de-

livered of her tenth child, Adolphus Frederick, Duke of Cambridge, who lived on till 1850. His eldest brother, George, Prince of Wales, now twelve years of age, was being brought up on the principle of strict confinement from the contagions of the world. His doting father had him dressed and delivered at punctual hours for the royal promenade, told him to be a good fellow, and for the rest left him to his tutor, Markham of Westminster, to treat him and the Duke of York as "the sons of any private gentleman," which Markham did with applications of the birch and a generous display of pedantry.

But the small prince had a great deal of difficulty in ascertaining what it was all about. It all seemed very stiff and cold, and nobody troubled to explain things to him. "I wish anybody would tell me what I ought to do; nobody gives me any instructions for my conduct." There were the rules, of course, and the time schedules, and the sums and declensions; but why?

It wasn't too bad, in a way, and it was jolly to sow wheat in the gardens at Kew and reap it and bake little loaves from the flour for distribution among the royal family. But what was going on in that world outside, from which messengers were always arriving in a hurry, and of which he could sometimes get a furtive glimpse through the palings or the coach window? And why, when Dr. Markham wasn't there and the king did not want him, was he left to himself so much? Though, to be sure, there were friends in the kitchen from whom an extra cake of gingerbread might sometimes be secured. And why was he always getting these disagreeable splotches on his face? Yes, somebody might tell him about it all. But nobody did. There were moments when he couldn't bear it, and then he would take a chance shot with such scraps of gossip as his small mind could pick

up in this puzzling home where everything was so secret. Occasionally he scored an unexpected effect. Once, on being punished for an offense that he had not committed, he rushed in a rage to his father's room and screamed outside the door, "Wilkes and Number Forty-Five forever!" Some day he would teach them; which he did.

To take a little further note of our scene in 1774. Having as a coxswain fought a bear in the neighborhood of the north pole, a midshipman named Horatio Nelson was shortly to be promoted at the age of seventeen to an acting lieutenancy, sailing with a convoy for Gibraltar. In Ireland, the Honorable Arthur Wellesley, aged five, was playing with no knowledge whatever of another small boy, aged five also, who was known in an obscure Corsican family as Napoleone Buonaparte. Rodney, Hood, and Howe were in the full prime of their powers.

2

And, for all it was the eighteenth century, Peace had her ebb and flow of heroes no less than War. John Wesley, having ridden a hundred thousand miles on horseback—usually reading the poets and the philosophers—had recently at the age of sixty-nine yielded reluctantly to the persuasion of friends and taken to a carriage. His custom was to rise at four in the morning and preach at five, "one of the healthiest exercises in the world," and in his seventy-eighth year he was to announce, "By the blessing of God I am just the same as I was in my twenty-eighth."

Joseph Priestley at forty-one was investigating with equal zest the principles of oxygen and nonconformity, and James Watt, three years younger, was about to enter the Soho Engineering Works at Birmingham, with fantastic notions about steam. At Etruria in Staffordshire,

Josiah Wedgwood was producing his jasper ware under patronage of the queen, and William Herschel at Bath was neglecting music for astronomy, making a five-foot Newtonian reflector with his own hands, and embarking on those heavenly voyages that seven years later were to be crowned by the discovery of Uranus.

The arts, too, were rich in distinction and prophecy. If Handel had departed, Thomas Arne was still there, and with ampler achievements than "Rule Britannia" to his credit. In 1774, Garrick, at the height of his fame, was presiding over the fortunes of Drury Lane; and in the following year a girl of twenty, by name Sarah Siddons, was to appear under his management, failing incisively in the rôle of Juliet. It was reserved for Manchester to recognize her genius a year later. Garrick himself had his mortifications. In 1777, he was commanded to beguile a domestic evening at the "Queen's House" (Buckingham Palace), and chose a farce of his own composition; "but the comparative coldness with which he was heard by the royal party greatly damped his exertions."

Thomas Gainsborough had recently come up to town from Bath, and was disputing supremacy as a portrait-painter with Reynolds and Romney. Thomas Lawrence was as yet but a boy of five. The great Hogarth had been dead ten years, but Thomas Rowlandson and James Gillray were showing signs of a not unworthy succession in social and political satire. Paul Sandby, born in 1725, had laid the foundations of an exquisite English school of water-color, that was already being enriched by Alexander Cozens, the Eton drawing master and reputed son of Peter the Great, and by the yet rarer talent of Alexander's own son, John Robert. The lovely tradition then established came in 1775 under its most fortunate star,

for in that year Joseph Mallord William Turner and Thomas Girtin were born, the trinity of genius being fulfilled seven years later with the birth of John Sell Cotman. In 1773, a boy of ten, by name George Morland, had exhibited at the Royal Academy; three years later John Constable was born. And in the year of Fox's resignation, Robert and James Adam, Esquires, who had recently completed the Adelphi, published the second volume of their "Works in Architecture"; while a new boy at Eton, Richard Porson, was disconcerting his masters by an uncanny dexterity in the classics.

In literature Samuel Johnson at the age of sixty-five enjoyed an undisputed and oracular preeminence. Engaged at present on an account of his journey to the Hebrides, he kept Mr. Boswell in a twitter of delight during an absence from London by sending frequent requests for information by post, and asking for assistance in such matters as forwarding small casks of porter to acquaintances who had been civil to him in Scotland. But one letter, dated July 4, 1774, was heavy with deep and personal sorrow. "Of poor dear Dr. Goldsmith there is little to be told, more than the papers have made publick. He died of a fever, made, I am afraid, more violent by uneasiness of mind. His debts began to be heavy, and all his resources were exhausted. Sir Joshua is of opinion that he owed not less than two thousand pounds. Was ever poet so trusted before?"

William Cowper, at Olney, was wrestling in his young middle-age with the terrors of melancholia, supported in a slender hold on sanity by the devotion of Mary Unwin, and by an affecting submission to gentle pursuits that in less distempered moods were yet to enrich the urbanities of English verse. An Ayrshire peasant, at the age of fifteen, was writing his first poems in the Scottish dialect.

It was a moment when, if a great age was passing, a greater was being born.

In 1770, the boy Chatterton had ended his tragedy in starvation; and the same year had seen the birth of William Wordsworth. In 1771 Christopher Smart at the age of forty-nine had died within the rules of the King's Bench, his poor clouded mind recalling snatches of the "Song of David," his body wasted in penury. On July 30 of that year, Thomas Gray died at Cambridge; and a fortnight later Walter Scott was born in Edinburgh. In 1772, 1774, and 1775 the names of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Southey, and Charles Lamb were added to the roll.

Sheridan belongs more conspicuously to our narrative; but there are others who may adorn it with a passing word. The official Muse in 1774 was represented by William Whitehead, in the dreary succession of Nahum Tate, Nicholas Rowe, and Laurence Eusden; himself to be followed by the livelier Thomas Warton and the no livelier Henry James Pye. In 1774, a boy of seventeen was serving his apprenticeship to Basire, the engraver, but in his own time William Blake was to be little observed by the world of fashion and authority. George Crabbe, three years older, was preparing in Suffolk for an excursion to London, with a bundle of poems as a precarious passport to attention, of which he was later to receive a civil measure from Fox. Samuel Rogers, who was to live to be over ninety, to know and gossip about everybody, and to see the birth of Edmund Gosse and, bar a few months, of Bernard Shaw, was now a schoolboy receiving the liberal education that should fit him for partnership in his father's banking business.

In 1774, too, Edward Gibbon, still under forty and already intent on Rome, succeeded Goldsmith as profes-

sor in ancient history at the Royal Academy, with a much more imposing equipment than the poet's somewhat flighty scholarship. But in the Literary Club, founded by Johnson and Reynolds in 1764 but not so named until Garrick's death in 1779, the "kind of sneering infidelity" that Boswell was pained to discover in his "Historical Writings" was an even graver disability than Poor Noll's occasional petulance.

The club members, of whom Gibbon became one in 1774, would hardly at that date notice the misfortunes of the unhappy man who was three years later to be an object of deep anxiety to their presiding spirit. It was in December, 1773, that Walpole noted the disgrace of Dr. Dodd, the macaroni parson, who had made improper approaches to preferment, and had been deprived of his royal chaplaincy. The subsequent forgery and its miserable expiation were not to engage Johnson's attention till 1777.

But Gibbon was not the only new member distinguished in 1774 by election to the most renowned of clubs. When all the charges against Fox's early years have been heard, no more conclusive testimony to his essential worth and integrity need be advanced than the letter written by Johnson to Boswell on March 5 of that year: "We have added to the Club, Charles Fox, Sir Charles Bunbury, Dr. Fordyce, and Mr. Steevens." Admission to Johnson's hierarchy could be no guarantee for the future; but it was as desirable a certificate of character as the society of that day could award.

3

Horace Walpole, who in 1772 had been out of politics for over four years, but continued to survey the English

world with a discrimination that has enlivened the history of an age, wrote on April 7 of that year: "Though I had never been in the House of Commons since I had quitted Parliament, the fame of Charles Fox raised my curiosity, and I went this day to hear him." Walpole was then fifty-five, and too experienced and fastidious a connoisseur of affairs to be taken by sham sensations; Fox was twenty-three. The circumstance of Walpole's visit to the House after so long an absence is in itself significant of the impact that the youthful member had made upon the town.

The occasion was Charles's motion for leave to bring in his Marriage Bill, "and he introduced it with ease, grace, and clearness, and without the prepared or elegant formality of a young speaker." Charles took no pains to shine in the substance of his opening, "but his sense and facility showed that he could shine." Burke opposed the motion in a long speech, profuse in metaphor and commanding in diction, but copious above measure, and resembling "the beginning of a book on speculative doctrines." During this performance, Fox had been moving about the House in animated conversation at large, apparently taking no notice of the member who held the floor. But as Burke finished, Fox rose, and to Walpole's astonishment answered the elaborate pleadings of the great Irishman with a fluent precision that left no thrust uncountered.

As the advancing years matured those tones of stubborn deliberation that induced the positive Brougham to designate him as "if not the greatest orator, certainly the most accomplished debater, that ever appeared upon the theatre of public affairs in any age of the world," fluency became less characteristic of Fox's speech. In the height of his powers, it was only at rare moments of ex-

citement that the steady drive of his words approached volubility. But as Walpole listened in 1772, the facile rhetoric of youth had not yet exhausted itself. It was, however, already the instrument of a mind wide in its grasp and sparkling in resource.

Charles had returned late to the House from Newmarket, where he had lost a mere thousand or so, he had not been to bed for over twenty-four hours, and he had not prepared the draft of his bill. And yet he was not for a moment at a loss in presenting his design in coherent and lucid form. "This," exclaims Walpole, "was genius—was almost inspiration." Without partiality, Walpole noted the judgment, the courage, the dawning of an essential truthfulness, that were already beyond the reach of virtuosity, and concluded: "If Fox once reflects and abandons his vices, in which he is as proud of shining as by his parts, he will excel Burke." And in a letter on the same occasion to Sir Horace Mann, he wrote: "[Tulley's] laboured orations are puerile in comparison with this boy's manly vigour."

Such was the impression made upon this shrewdest of observers by the man who two years later, with augmented powers, woke to a sense of his public destiny, and cut loose from a party with which his maturing conscience could have no ties. It is with justice that Lord John Russell observes: "In 1774 we may place the real commencement of Mr. Fox's political career."

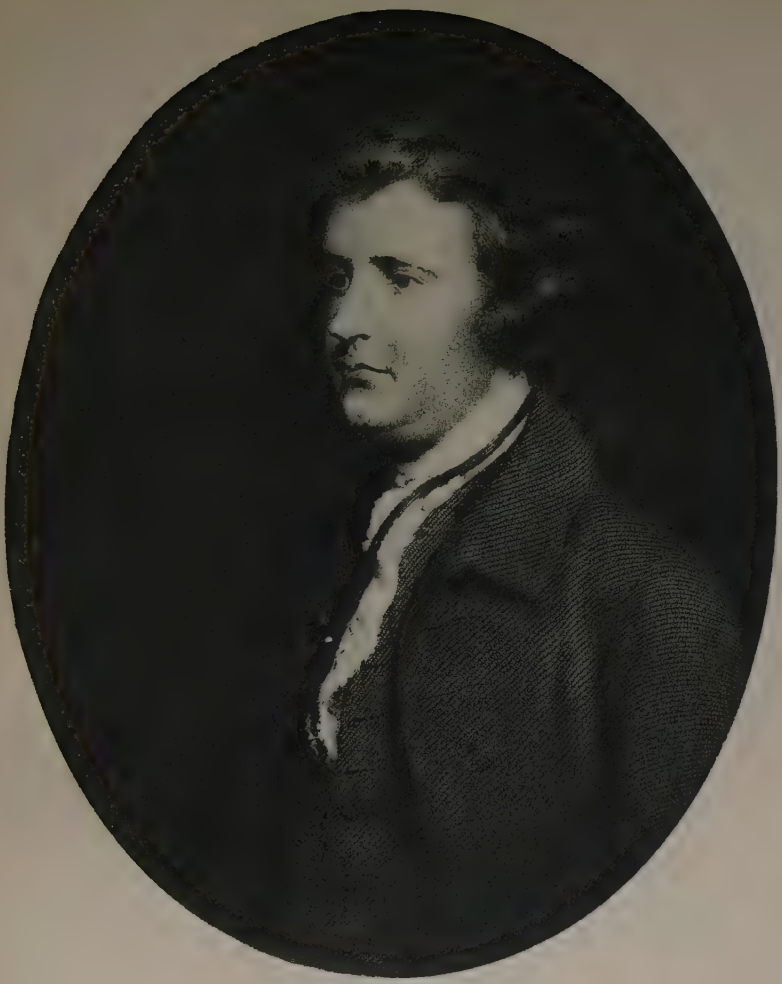
Mr. Reginald Lucas, in his valuable if seasonably prejudiced life of Lord North, quotes Sir George Trevelyan as saying: "Never was there a man whose faults were so largely those of his time, whilst his eminent merits and enormous services to his country were so peculiarly his own." Mr. Lucas replies that "his faults were manifold and conspicuous enough," but that "we shall find

some difficulty in discovering what were the enormous services that he rendered to his country."

It all depends on the point of view. If patriotic service consists merely in beating the Froggies or making the damned Yanks run, and in planting suitable flags from pole to pole, then Fox little merits the admiration of his countrymen. But if to find that corruption in your own house is even more intolerable than it is elsewhere; if to care more for honor than for gain; if to insist on toleration in thought and speech; if, in short, to have been, more perhaps than any other man, the origin of much that is best in English liberalism, its courage and generosity and far-sightedness, is to deserve the gratitude of Englishmen, then Fox's place in our national life is a secure and eminent one. And his honor is enhanced when we remember that he laid these foundations in an age when Wilkes with his claims for the most elementary public rights was regarded as a portent, and that he himself was born and bred in a society in which a fawning self-interest was the most respectable of motives.

Chatham's powerful rhetoric, magnificently supported by the intrepidity of heroes on sea and land, could show the world that Britons never would be slaves; but the ruling classes, to which Fox belonged, contaminated even this rudimentary patriotism with the paltry intrigues of avarice. So far, at the dictates of expediency and with questionable candor, they might be persuaded to go; that there could be a yet deeper patriotism never came into the range of their speculation. Liberalism still has to endure taunts that readily inflame reactionary sentiment, but liberalism is today a compact body well able to withstand such onsets. Fox in his time had to endure the taunts almost alone, and they left him unintimidated.

Speaking in the House of Commons in 1815, Sir



EDMUND BURKE
From the portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds

James Mackintosh used these remarkable words: "When Mr. Burke and Mr. Fox exhorted Great Britain to be wise in relation to America, and just towards Ireland, they were called Americans and Irishmen. But they considered it as the greatest of all human calamities to be unjust. They thought it worse to inflict than to suffer wrong: and they rightly thought themselves then most really Englishmen, when they most laboured to dissuade England from tyranny."

And, in more detail, Lord John Russell advances the same view: "It was the task of Mr. Fox to vindicate, with partial success, but with brilliant ability, the cause of freedom and the interests of mankind. He resisted the mad perseverance of Lord North in the project of subduing America. He opposed the war undertaken by Mr. Pitt against France, as unnecessary and unjust. He proved himself at all times the friend of religious liberty, and endeavoured to free both the Protestant and Roman Catholic dissenter from disabilities on account of their religious faith. He denounced the slave trade. He supported at all times a reform of the House of Commons."

Such resolution is high testimony to character at the most favorable times; in Fox under George III it was heroic. The American Revolution first brought it into play.

4

The Peace of Paris in 1763, which closed the Seven Years' War, had established British control in the continent of North America. For a hundred and fifty years the territories of the New World had been disputed by Spanish, French, Dutch, and English settlers, boundaries being gradually defined in a succession of wars, raids, treaties, and charters. Exploited and oppressed in turn

by each of the rival interests, the American Indians had dwindled toward extermination in an epic tale of fortitude and cruelty.

A strange diversity of character had gone to the founding and development of the colonies, governed by as wide a diversity of motive. Fugitives from religious persecution, soldiers and merchants of fortune, evangelists and undischarged debtors, prophets in the wilderness and prophets at ten percent, pioneers led by hope and prodigals driven by despair, all had assembled in these precarious origins of the United States. And while the communities of the Atlantic seaboard had been progressing toward social and economic prosperity, no race had been so adventurous as the French in opening up the immense fertility that stretched away toward the west.

When, therefore, the Paris treaty gave the rewards of colonization exclusively into British hands the French population of America conceived a very natural distaste for their Anglo-Saxon neighbors. When these neighbors decided to revolt against their mother country, they had to reckon not only with the British crown, but also with the French settlers.

In the same way, the Indians had no quarrel with a king who lived across an incalculable expanse of waters. It was, indeed, not until his redcoats came so spectacularly on the scene, that George III was even a name to the warriors of the Five Nations. But his name then was an enchanted one, for his redcoats came as deliverers. The English palefaces of New England had been terrible enemies; their governors had even offered rewards—in one case no less than a hundred pounds apiece—for Indian scalps. And now the marching files, so splendidly dressed, had come from the great king to chastise the men who had done these things. Why the English king should

be fighting Englishmen, the Indian was not curious to know. For the Indian, like the French, formed a natural alliance with a mother country, of whom he knew nothing, against her American colonists, of whom he knew a great deal too much.

Without attempting even to summarize the history of New World colonization, one or two capital considerations must be noted here. The colonies at the time of which we are writing, were thirteen in number.* Their trade was a very valuable asset to the mother country, its profits being estimated at the then important figure of two millions annually. The origins of the separate communities differed greatly in character: Pennsylvania, for example, was the territorial expansion of William Penn's Quaker settlement at Philadelphia; the Carolinas were founded by lawless elements that, unable to accommodate themselves to the order of existing colonies, inaugurated an irregular society of their own, living in a state not far removed from outlawry, and distinguishing themselves forever in American history by the institution of Negro slavery; while New Jersey, when it was partitioned from the older colony of New York, opened its account in the full enjoyment of a settled and liberal constitution.

In the same way, the charters under which the thirteen colonies operated were of many kinds, instruments sometimes of public commonweal, and sometimes of little more than private corruption. But they proclaimed one principle in common—that the colony was to be subject to the crown of England, but that taxation could be levied within the colony only by its own representatives. The terms of this agreement were not always identical, and

* Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

in some cases were not even specifically defined; but it was recognized, always by custom and usually by legal sanction, that the American colonist was outside the scope of direct levies made by the English exchequer.

For more than a century various expedients had been contrived by the mother country for the purpose of tapping a source of revenue that was closed to the tax-collector. Most obnoxious among these were the navigation acts, whereby colonial imports and exports could be carried by none but English vessels, which meant enforced contributions from all colonial trade with foreign countries, and even from intercolonial trade itself. These measures were resisted, and often openly set at defiance, but the home government persisted in attempting to maintain them.

Colonial manufactures were discouraged as being an invasion of the British markets, and the direct exchange of commodities between one colony and another was forbidden. If Rhode Island wanted hats from Georgia, it had to get them through the agency of British merchants. Under these conditions smuggling became a general practice, and the colonists lost no opportunity of showing their disrespect for legislation that they considered to be devoid of equity. Of a million and a half pounds of tea consumed by them yearly, it is said that not ten percent conformed to regulations by passing through English ports.

Inevitably a mood of hostility developed between the crown and its American dependents. The devices adopted by the colonists to assert what they conceived to be their natural rights were viewed by ministers at home as acts of rebellion. Any concerted policy of reconciliation based on mutual interest was beyond the imagination of George III and his Friends, and more and more they accustomed their minds to the necessity of suppressing the incipient

dangers of revolt. The operation of the navigation acts was stiffened, and fresh impositions were laid.

For a time resistance did not go beyond private evasion of the law, and a public demand for representation in the British House of Commons. The evasion was penalized wherever it could be exposed, and the demand received no serious consideration. English statesmanship was unable to get beyond a manifestly confused doctrine that, while the propriety or even the legality of taxing the colonies was questionable, colonial establishment was possible only on such principles as those of the navigation acts, which gave taxation an undisguised approval. In 1765 George Grenville, chancellor of the exchequer, a leading exponent of this official casuistry, passed his notorious Stamp Act, whereby over fifty separate duties were imposed on the colonists, ranging from a halfpenny on one-sheet newspapers to documentary stamps of ten pounds.

Popular feeling in America was roused to a fury hardly controlled by the misgivings of more moderate counselors who pleaded that submission to injury was better than the disasters that might be precipitated by organized resistance. Patrick Henry excited the Virginian House of Burgesses to cries of "Treason! Treason!" as he reminded George III that Cæsar had his Brutus, Charles I his Cromwell; but, treason or no treason, the warning was echoed throughout the colonies. Riots were of frequent occurrence, Lord Bute and other unpopular personages were burnt in effigy, stamp offices were destroyed by mobs composed largely of sober and responsible citizens, and a congress of the colonies was summoned to New York for the purpose of repudiating the odious act.

It met, acknowledged the supremacy of the crown,

and declared the colonies that it represented to be outside the jurisdiction of the king's revenue officers. In 1766, the elder Pitt exclaimed in the House of Commons: "I rejoice that America has resisted. . . . In a just cause of quarrel you may crush America to atoms, but in this crying injustice I am one who will lift up my hands against it. . . . America, if she fell, would fall like the strong man; she would embrace the pillars of the state, and pull down the constitution along with her."

In the same year the Stamp Act was repealed, but the machinery for obtaining colonial revenue under the old pretenses was again tightened up. New taxes were levied, and it became a point of national honor among the colonists to boycott goods to which they applied.

5

The word "national" is used in this connection advisedly. Whatever the faults of policy and temper may have been on either side in the quarrel between Great Britain and her American colonies, the first capital consequence of that quarrel was that the separate communities, under what they conceived to be a common injustice, were rapidly forming a common consciousness. It was a process of which the official mind in England was sublimely unaware, and one of which the colonists themselves for long had but a very imperfect realization.

Whether an America developing to its full powers as part of the British Empire would have been a blessing or a misfortune to the world it is idle to speculate; but it is certain that fiscal demands of the home government and the manner of their presentation stirred in the colonies an instinct of national unity which, once it had taken root, could lead to nothing but separation in the end. In

the meantime, a few men alone in either country felt dimly what was going forward. While Lord North was announcing that he would or would not do this or that until he saw America prostrate at his feet, Edmund Burke was signalizing his first appearance in parliament by advocating a recognition of the colonial claims that he was to support with so steady an eloquence in the coming days, and in America George Washington, seeing the trade of his people crippled and their liberties encroached upon by the increasing activities of the royal billet-sergeants and press-masters, wrote to a friend that "our lordly masters in Great Britain" were clearly set on the destruction of American freedom, and that as a last resource no man should hesitate to "use arms in defense of so valuable a blessing."

In 1770, North, a little undecided now as to the doctrine of prostration, removed the offending duties save that on tea. For a time the situation quietened, but the concessions were not followed by any determined effort to give real safeguards to colonial interests, and while the navigation acts continued to take effect, the military governors of the crown became increasingly severe in their edicts. In 1772 a schooner that had been sent to patrol the coast of Rhode Island in search of smugglers was seized and burned by the citizens of Providence. The tea duties became a storm center, and bodies of colonists were organized in the seaboard states to prevent the landing of any consignments of tea from English ports. On December 16, 1773, the famous Tea Party, news of which we have seen Horace Walpole recording in his journal, took place in Boston.

Punitive steps were at once taken by the king. The Boston Port Act was passed, forbidding any vessel to discharge goods at that city; other measures legalized

a standing army to maintain crown interests in the colonies, gave additional powers to the military governors, tampered with existing charters, and ordained redistribution of certain territories. Protests against these enactments were summarily dismissed by the military authorities. Another congress of colonies was summoned, and met at Philadelphia in September, 1774. George Washington was a delegate; Patrick Henry, in words that might have startled the complacency of Westminster, declared, "I am not a Virginian, but an American." The claims of the crown to direct taxation of America, and to garrisoning of the colonies in time of peace at the expense of the colonists, were repudiated in formal resolutions.

Hardly anyone as yet discussed independence openly as an issue. Washington himself still regarded the idea as outside the designs of "any thinking man in all North America." In a letter written in this year, he says: "I think I can announce it as a fact, that it is not the wish or interest of government, or any other upon this continent, separately or collectively, to set up for independence." But he and thousands of others were now resolved never to give way in their demand for autonomy in their domestic affairs. The astonishing thing is that the authorities in England did not for a moment pause to consider whether the demand was reasonable. That subjects overseas should question the beneficent wisdom of his Majesty's government was not to be tolerated—that was the compass of the ministerial view. Since these subjects were in fact presuming in this way, only one conclusion was possible—they must very severely be taught a lesson.

And so General Gage, Governor of Massachusetts, was ordered to teach it. He proceeded to mobilize his political and military forces, only to find himself con-

fronted by preparations of an exceedingly alarming nature. Throughout New England, the colonists were forming themselves into bands of "minute-men"—men pledged to take up arms on the spot at a minute's warning. It was computed that twelve thousand of them were already thus enlisted.

The king at home continued fondly to hope that with a little energetic action in the House "this arduous business will be gone through with much less trouble than was supposed," he was delighted to observe "the feebleness and futility" of the opposition to the Boston Port Act, he derived "infinite satisfaction" from Lord North's conduct of the bill for the better administration of justice in the Massachusetts Bay, directed chiefly against the lawless Bostonians, and he was edified by reports (July, 1774) that the insurgents seemed much dispirited by the arrival of troops in Boston and would undoubtedly be brought to a "speedy submission."

In September a less confident tone asserts itself: "The dye is now cast, the Colonies must either submit or triumph. I do not wish to come to severer measures, but we must not retreat. . . . I have no objection afterwards to their seeing that there is no inclination for the present to lay fresh taxes upon them, but I am clear there must always be one tax to keep up the right, and as such I approve of the Tea-Duty." This, it will be noted, is nine months after the Bostonians had demonstrated that they did not approve of it at all.

On November 18, the king writes—again to North: "I am not sorry that the line of conduct seems now chalked out . . . the New English Governments are in a state of rebellion, blows must decide whether they are to be subject to this country or independent." At this point Gage recommended temporizing measures; the king

instantly replied, through North: "His idea of suspending the Acts appears to me the most absurd that can be suggested. The people are ripe for mischief, upon which the mother country adopts suspending the measures she has thought necessary; this must suggest to the colonies a fear that alone prompts them to their present violence; we must either master them or totally leave them to themselves and treat them as aliens. I do not by this mean to insinuate that I am for advising new measures: but I am for supporting those already undertaken."

On November 29, a new parliament assembled, and on the next day the king in his address strongly denounced the revolting colonies. The Lords and the Commons responded in unison. In the Upper House Pitt, now Lord Chatham, raised an unheeded protest: "I contend not for indulgence, but for justice to America . . . tyranny, whether ambitioned by an individual part of the legislature, or by the bodies who compose it, is equally intolerable to all British subjects. . . . All attempts to impose servitude on such men, to establish despotism over a mighty continental nation, must be vain, must be futile. . . . Woe be to him who sheds the first, the inexpiable drop of blood, in an impious war with a people contending in the great cause of public liberty."

Burke, who a few months before on the same theme had declared that "nothing in this world can read so awful and so instructive a lesson, as the conduct of Ministry in this business, upon the mischief of not having large and liberal ideas in the management of great affairs," and had charged his hearers to "reflect how you are to govern a people who think they ought to be free and think they are not . . ." adding, "Such is the state of America, that after wading up to your eyes in blood, you could only end just where you had begun," pleaded

with the Commons to give heed to a petition from the City of London for a fair investigation of colonial claims, and was as little heeded as Chatham.

North and the king had the parliamentary vote firmly in hand, and it was announced in plain terms that no argument was to be permitted. Unconditional submission was the minimum demand to be made. This temper could now meet with but one response from the temper of the colonists. Long years of unprincipled misgovernment were at last to be brought to reckoning. Actual hostilities did not commence until April, 1775, by which time the voice of Charles Fox had joined with no uncertainty in the dispute.

CHAPTER VI

Fox in Opposition. The First Stage

1775

I

ON APRIL 19, 1774, BURKE DELIVERED HIS GREAT SPEECH on American taxation, from which passages have been quoted above. In the same debate Fox spoke briefly, but to the same point: "The Americans will become useful subjects, if you use them with that temper and lenity which you ought to do . . . a tax can only be laid for three purposes; the first for a commercial regulation, the second for a revenue, and the third for asserting your right. As to the two first, it has been clearly denied that it is for either; as to the latter, it is only done with a view to irritate and declare war against the Americans, which, if you persist in, I am clearly of opinion you will effect, or force them into open rebellion." Not, as it is reported to us, very exact or logical; but also not sophisticated or laboring for effect.

There is an undertone of plain seriousness in the simple phrases, suggesting that the young statesman of twenty-five was at last pleading a cause in which his heart and his intelligence were deeply engaged. He now has no one to please but himself, his own conscience, and he is gravely happy in the emancipation. Three days later he spoke against the Massachusetts bill, opening with the witty retort to a previous speaker: "Sir, I am glad to hear from the right honourable gentleman who spoke

last, that now is not the time to tax America; that the only time for doing this is when all these disturbances are quelled, and the people are returned to their duty; so, I find, that taxes are to be the reward of obedience." He complained of the "constant line of conduct in this country practised towards America, consisting of violence and weakness," and submitted that the bill would at once inflame passions and fail of its purpose. And within a month George III in jocular mood at a levee told his friends that "he had as lief fight the Bostonians as the French." Through the rest of this year, 1774, American events, as we have seen, gathered toward the crisis. We hear no more from Charles on the topic until early in 1775.

On July 1, 1774, Walpole noted in his journal: "Died Henry Fox, Lord Holland. He expired easily, quite worn out in mind and body. Lord Holland left everything to his wife and £400,000 of public money. She paid all the debts of her two eldest sons; so Stephen remained possessed of £10,000 a year; Charles with a place of £600 a year, an estate of £200 and £10,000 in money; Henry the youngest, had £20,000 and £900 a year. It was certain that Lord Holland died still much richer than he had pretended, but how much was not known. I have since doubted of Lord Holland's riches; at least when his son Stephen died, it was but a moderate estate that came to the grandson."

It may be noted here that Lady Holland survived her husband three weeks only, and that Charles's eldest brother, Stephen, died in the following November. A few months before his father's death, Charles had written to Lady Holland, "That my extreme imprudence and dissipation has given both of you uneasiness is what I have long known," but added that he had lately begun

"to flatter myself that, particularly with you, and in a great degree with my father, I had regained that sort of confidence which was once the greatest pride of my life."

Lady Mary Coke, daughter of the Duke of Argyll, connected by marriage with "Coke of Norfolk," and a neighbor of Holland House, where she used to play cribbage with Charles and his mother, gives a less favorable impression. She was forty-eight when she wrote in her journal at the time of Lady Holland's fatal illness (July 3, 1774): "She intends . . . after some legacies, leaving all between [her youngest son] and Charles. The latter is at present twelve thousand pounds worse than nothing, and has taken Chambers at the Temple in order to study the Law. He and his Brother the present Lord Holland's behaviour at the death of their Father was so void of all feeling that 'tis terrible to think of. They both went into Company directly, without observing any kind of decency, and will I suppose do just the same thing when their poor Mother breathes her last." Again, on July 20: "Her [Lady Holland's] two eldest sons seem very unworthy of further favours, especially Charles, who L[d] Villiers had seen at noon at Almack's, and he talk'd of going in the evening to Mr. Foot's, when his poor amiable Mother, to whom he had so many obligations, was suffering agonies, and at the last extremity." And four days later, after Lady Holland's death: "For her sons, at least for Mr. Charles Fox, nothing can be said." *

These passages indicate the censorious view that was not uncommonly taken of Charles in his youth. But Lady Mary is a wholly unreliable witness. She is the "white cat" of a brilliant little biographical study by Lady

* *The Letters and Journals of Lady Mary Coke* (Edinburgh, 1889).

Louisa Stuart* (1757-1851): "Her understanding lay smothered under so much pride, self-conceit, prejudice, obstinacy, and violence of temper, that you did not know where to look for it." In a word, she was "invincibly wrong-headed," and no less so, we may believe, in her observations on Charles's conduct than in other matters.

We have seen the indulgence with which Henry Fox worshiped his brilliant son, and there is no doubt that Charles taxed that indulgence severely. The old paymaster in his closing days may have been perplexed by the boy's sacrifice of office on a matter of principle, but that his satisfaction in the talents that Charles was displaying was seriously diminished, by even such extravagance as was the gossip of the town, is not to be believed. Lord Holland had himself to thank, and he was not the man to grieve unduly over courses that he had so liberally encouraged. With all his faults, he had a sense of humor. On his death-bed he gave instructions that if George Selwyn called he was on no account to be refused. Selwyn, according to Walpole, had a passion for "coffins, corpses and executions." Lord Holland in giving his order, observed that if he was alive he should be glad to see George; if he was dead, George would be glad to see him.

2

The New Year (1775) found the parliamentary debates on America in full swing. The London merchants diligently pressed the demand of the colonies for an unprejudiced examination of their claims, and in leading their case Burke was seconded by Fox with a vigor that matured with every speech he made. The young liberal,

* Lord Bute's daughter. The sketch was written in 1827. Lady Mary died in 1811.

now firmly seated in opposition, attacked North's policy as "framed on false information, conceived in weakness and ignorance, and executed with negligence." They had been promised that the appearance of troops in Boston would restore the people to tranquillity, whereas every courier brought news that the troops themselves were in an extremely precarious condition, and that the agitation was everywhere gathering force.

On February 2, in a speech of which no full report has been preserved, he discovered, according to Gibbon, who was present, "powers for regular debate, which neither his friends hoped, nor his enemies dreaded." This was on a motion by North to present an address to the king undertaking the loyal disposal of the nation's arms and purse "to enforce due obedience to the laws and authority of the supreme legislature." Fox proposed an amendment "deploring that . . . the measures taken by His Majesty's servants tend rather to widen than to heal the unhappy differences . . . and praying a speedy alteration of the same."

North was too securely entrenched to be shaken by these impertinences, but Fox was able nevertheless to carry 104 votes against the ministerial 305. It was, in Walpole's words, a vote for civil war. The king in acknowledging the address did not doubt but that he would have the concurrence of the House in "such augmentation of his Forces as the present occasion shall be thought to require." Fox told the government that they had for months been talking of the American rebellion; and asked why, if it were to be opposed by force, they had done nothing in all that time to prepare for the contingency. Their policy was morally indefensible, and now they were showing a total want of ability in conducting it.

There is no doubt that North himself at this time was without any convictions as to what was the proper thing to do. Nothing would have pleased him better than to find some means short of resignation of escaping responsibility altogether. Of meeting the responsibility by an enlightened survey of the situation and the administration of even-handed justice, he was incapable. Under his leadership, loud in assertions of national honor, the king's party now firmly held the view that American disaffection was a wanton betrayal of trust that must be sharply brought to account. That there could be any serious difficulty in effecting this salutary design they did not for a moment suppose. A major-general or two and a stiff little expeditionary force would speedily vindicate the rights of the British Crown.

North himself was less confident, but had not the courage to say so. First he put diplomatic obstacles in the way of sending out reenforcements to Gage; then under pressure he hurried the preparations forward. Then, without warning, to everybody's surprise and to the indignation and alarm of his own party, he introduced, on February 20, a conciliatory resolution, whereby the colonies, on undertaking to contribute to the "common defense" in emergency, were to be exempt from crown taxation, although the right to levy such taxation was maintained. The bellicose majority in the House, that is to say North's own followers, were supported by public feeling in regarding this proposal as a confession of fear in the face of danger.

Unfortunately, it was just this, and so lacked the ameliorative influence that it should have possessed if it had been more opportunely made. That North should thus oscillate between defiance and concession was in accordance with his character, but the king's position in

the matter is less intelligible. His obstinate attitude toward colonial insubordination has already been indicated, and his severest critics could never accuse George III of cowardice. His follies were pursued with a quite stedfast resolution. His behavior on this occasion was as erratic as North's; since we cannot attribute it to the same motives, it is difficult to find for it any explanation other than mere stupidity.

On February 8, he wrote to North, hoping, on what grounds he alone knew, that the language of his answer to the address would "open the eyes of the deluded Americans," but sure at least that if it did not, it would "set every delicate man at liberty to avow the propriety of the most coercive measures." A week later, while the new fighting force was being organized, he wrote again to North that while he was "a thorough friend to holding out the olive-branch," he had no doubt that once the colonies realized that the government was in military earnest, they would submit.

A flash of the finer George appears at the end of the letter: "I entirely place my security in the protection of the Divine Disposer of all things, and shall never look to the right or left, but steadily pursue the tract which my conscience dictates to be the right one." The dictates were often singularly unfortunate, but the king was justified of his boast. And at this moment his conscience was persistently telling him that the Americans, who were threatening revolt because they refused to be taxed, must be coerced into obedience. It must have been clear even to his inelastic mind that by removing the cause of complaint he could also remove the threat; and yet for months he refused to make a compromise that he repeatedly declared would be a surrender of his honor and an end of his authority.

We remember that when in an interval of comparative enlightenment North listened to American demands, George was careful to stipulate for the retention of the tea tax as at least a peppercorn rent. Since then even so much enlightenment had passed, and taxation was again in full play. On February 15, 1775, at 6 min. pt. 10 A.M., the king was determined in the name of conscience to uphold the practice. And yet on February 19, he wrote to North, "I very highly approve of the resolution to be moved to-morrow"—the resolution that North did introduce on the 20th, as we have seen. And the king adds oddly, "It plainly defines the line to be held in America," as though nothing had ever been nearer to his thoughts than the concessions that it was now proposed to make.

When North brought the resolution forward, he was hotly attacked by the implacables of his own majority, who looked upon his conduct as a betrayal. So formidable was their resentment, that it looked for some time as though the debate would result in a government split and defeat of the minister. In this extremity, Wedderburn was deputed to explain that there was no real intention of modifying the severity of their attitude toward the colonists; and this assurance, backed by close whip work, saved the situation. That is to say, it saved the vote, but it left North's resolution stripped of credit.

Fox, joining in the debate, congratulated the opposition on having persuaded North to listen to reason, if indeed the noble lord really meant what he said. But did he? The speaker took leave gravely to doubt it. In fact, he was sure that the noble lord meant nothing of the sort; that he was stampeded by fear of the situation into making promises that he had no intention of keeping when it should suit his convenience to break them. "No one in this country, who is sincerely for peace, will trust the

speciousness of his expressions, and the Americans will reject them with disdain."

On the next day, February 21, the king wrote to his minister rejoicing in the zeal shown by the House in supporting "the just superiority of the mother country over its colonists," and again approving of the resolution, "which certainly in a most manly manner shows what is expected, and gives up no right." In which confused complacency his Majesty watched the peril that was now so rapidly brewing to disaster.

3

The session was at this point enlivened by further electoral activities on the part of Wilkes, of whom, however, it would be unprofitable for us to take further notice. In March, North brought forward infamous proposals that finally discarded all pretense of conciliation. The colonists, in resistance to the acts confining their trade to English ports and shipping, had cut off their contacts with English markets. The new bills, affecting New England, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina, forbade any traffic between those states and any country other than Great Britain and the British West Indies. This meant submission or starvation. Fox told the government that step by step they were reducing their legislative authority to utter contempt. Measures so devoid of justice and even of common humanity could, he supposed, be framed only for the express purpose of provoking to open rebellion the people against whom they were directed.

The first bill, dealing with New England, was passed by 215 votes to 61. Two days later an amendment was proposed, providing "that nothing in this act shall ex-

tend to prohibit the importation into any or either of the said provinces, of any fuel, meal, corn, flour, or victual, which shall be brought coastwise from any part of the continent of America." This precaution against actual famine, which incidentally would involve British loyalists no less than the rebels, was opposed by the government, who declared that they had battalions enough to look after their own adherents, and that, as for the rebels, the sooner they starved the better.

Burke scornfully exclaimed that having by their bill taken from the American subjects the right to live by their own labors, they now in rejecting the amendment were depriving them of the right to live by the charity of their friends. "You had reduced the people to beggary, and now you take the beggar's scrip from them." Fox again told North that while his policy was monstrous, it was, even from the ministerial point of view, inconceivably stupid. To attempt the starvation of the colonists was wicked; to propose methods that would bring friend and foe alike to common ruin was imbecile. The amendment was negatived by 188 votes to 58, and Fox could say with justice: "Sir, you have now, by refusing this proposition, completed the system of your folly."

In the course of these debates Charles more than once overstepped the bounds of parliamentary decorum in his opposition to North. But there are times when we cannot hear of these excesses without warming to them. When a minister claims parliamentary privilege for gross and palpable misconduct, it is very well that someone should have the courage to tell him to his face that he is a knave. And in his treatment of the American colonies North, intimately inspired by his royal master, was politically a knave. No private amiabilities or even virtues can excuse a minister of state who abuses power through

sheer misconception of moral values. The origins of the American trouble cannot be laid to North's charge, but from his accession to office to the outbreak of war, his policy did nothing but aggravate the quarrel. Of deliberate outrage we may acquit him, but his total incapacity to grasp the nature of the problem upon which his decisions were authoritative was outrage none the less.

Had English control of the American colonies been wise and tolerant, it is still probable that sooner or later separation would have taken place, by pacific understanding. The vast potentialities of the American continent made it imperative that if at any time the settlers should feel that independence was their proper destiny, their claim should be recognized without dispute. It is possible that under beneficent administration the claim would never have been made; that in time a system of emancipated unity would have been devised prophetic of the later ties of her great dominions to Britain.

But what might have happened does not concern us. What did happen was that English policy under North drove the colonists into revolt, and left the government no alternative but to meet the revolt with a disgraceful war. There are few passages of our history from which the national credit emerges in such dishonor, and in raising a voice of continuous and passionate protest, Charles Fox at the age of twenty-five gave splendid proof of patriotic courage.

It was no easy thing to do. The country had been inflamed by government rhetoric, and misinformed by government propaganda. North's majority, liberally dosed with the golden pills, was a very large one, and the small minority for whom Burke and Fox spoke was ill-organized, while several of its members had no very stout heart in the business. On the occasion of the New England

Bill debate the king could write confidently to North of "the languor of Opposition," and attribute it to a "sense of the nation warm in favour of the proposition." But Burke and Fox suffered no isolation to discourage them in the support of a hopeless cause. And decorum or none, a gleam of satisfaction irradiates this gloom of sinister incompetence, as Charles stands up and accuses North of "the most unexampled treachery and falsehood," and on being called to order explains that those are the words of his precise choice and that he abides by them.

North had frequently protested his insufficiency for the seals. Charles indorses the protest, and asks the minister why he does not relinquish them. "It is true that the noble lord has often confessed his incapacity, and from a consciousness of it has pretended a willingness to resign; but the event has proved that whatever his consciousness may have been, his love of the emoluments of office has completely conquered it." The thrust was a savage one, but Fox was not engaged in the amenities of a debating society. He was attacking a man whom he believed to be leading the country straight to shame and disaster.

On March 22, in a speech that lasted three hours, Burke presented his plan for conciliation with America. This celebrated oration has justly taken its place among the greatest performances in parliamentary debate. With wide and lucid erudition, the speaker sketched the history of American settlement, showed the conditions in which the relations between the crown and the colonists had been amicable and those under which they had become strained, illustrating his argument with a clear summary of trading figures. He then proceeded to make a series of proposals that would, he considered, place colonial administration on a basis of healthy and permanent cooperation. The tone of his speech was carefully pacific,

subdued in its passion, and apart from occasional references to the "noble lord in the blue riband"—North—indulging no personalities.

At this stage of events, separation was still a doctrine that found little favor in America and had hardly occurred even to the most ardent advocates of colonial rights in England, and Burke gave it no serious consideration in his survey of the problem. His one desire was for the vindication of our colonial authority, and his purpose to examine the means by which alone that authority could be maintained. "The proposition is peace. Not peace through the medium of war; not peace to be hunted through the labyrinth of intricate and endless negotiations; not peace to arise out of universal discord fomented, from principle, in all parts of the empire; not peace to depend on the juridical determination of perplexing questions, or the precise marking the shadowy boundaries of a complex government. It is simple peace, sought in its natural course, and in its ordinary haunts. It is peace sought in the spirit of peace, and laid in principles purely pacific."

The root of all the trouble was taxation. The colonies, it must by now be abundantly clear, would not submit to our levies, from which, moreover, there was no evidence that our exchequer had ever been a penny-piece the richer. He proposed, therefore, that we should formally abandon all claims to the right of taxation, and that at the same time we should ask the colonies to further the interests that they shared in common with the empire, by accepting full fiscal responsibility for their own internal administration, and that they should further undertake in the event of imperial necessity to consider in their own assemblies the propriety of contributing to the requirements of the crown. "My Resolutions therefore

mean to establish the equity and justice of a taxation of America by *grant,* and not by *imposition.*"

Burke's whole scheme was conceived in a spirit of the most enlightened statesmanship, and at the same time it is difficult to see how its wise and moderate simplicity can have failed to persuade even the hostile temper of that majority. Appeals to reason, that were to achieve a classic fame, could not, however, disturb North's slumber nor check the pugnacity of his colleagues. In vain did Burke beseech them to follow him into an air of loftier patriotism than their coercive dignities. "An Englishman is the unfittest person on earth to argue another Englishman into slavery." In what respect had the policy of aggression been justified? "In this situation, let us seriously and coolly ponder. What is it we have got by all our menaces, which have been many and ferocious? What advantage have we derived from the penal laws we have passed, and which, for the time, have been severe and numerous? What advances have we made towards our object by the sending of a force which, by land and sea, is no contemptible strength? Has the disorder abated? Nothing less."

It might be said that if concessions were offered, the colonies would interpret them as misgivings, and be emboldened to further trespasses. "Alas! alas! when will this speculation against fact and reason end? What will quiet these panic fears which we entertain of the hostile effect of a conciliatory conduct? Is it true that no case can exist in which it is proper for the sovereign to accede to the desires of his discontented subjects? . . . Is all authority of course lost when it is not pushed to the extreme? Is it a certain maxim that the fewer causes of dissatisfaction are left by government, the more the subject will be inclined to resist and rebel?" No control could

endure that was not benevolent in principle; the history of their own relations with Ireland and Wales—he cited also the cases of Chester and Durham—should convince them of that. His phrase was a memorable one: "Your standard could never be advanced an inch before your privileges."

He concluded by explaining the difference between his own proposals and those that had recently been made by North. The government measure, he said, amounted to no more than "ransom by auction," since the colonial quotas were to be finally regulated not by local assemblies but by parliament, a scheme in fact for "taxing the colonies in the antechamber of the noble lord and his successors." In other words, North proposed to leave the colonists to decide upon the method of collecting taxes, but reserved to the home government the right of decision as to what the taxes should be, while Burke proposed to leave the colonists with complete control as to both the nature and the extent of their taxation, with an explicit understanding that they would consider themselves pledged to take what in consultation appeared to be a reasonable share of such imperial responsibilities as might arise.

Burke at length came to his peroration: "We ought to elevate our minds to the greatness of that trust to which the order of providence has called us. By adverting to the dignity of this high calling, our ancestors have turned a savage wilderness into a glorious empire, and have made the most extensive and the only honourable conquests, not by destroying, but by promoting the wealth, the number, the happiness of the human race. Let us get an American revenue as we have got an American empire. English privileges have made it all that it is: English privileges alone will make it all it can be."

He thereupon put the first clause of his motion to the House. It was an historic moment. Acceptance of his proposals would undoubtedly have meant the pacification of America, with what ultimate result no one can tell. The future in any case may well have been destined not to lie with the extension of "English privileges alone." But of the immediate effect and of its lasting benefits, there could have been no question; and a splendid chapter would have been added to the credit of British statesmanship. The House divided, and Burke was defeated by 270 votes against 78.

4

Something like despair may well have fallen on the friends of reason as Burke's masterly appeal was thus dismissed. The opposition lords, led by the Marquis of Rockingham, did actually at this point pass a resolution that while they would continue to vote against the government's American policy, they would take no further part in the debates on the matter.

On May 15, Burke returned to the theme in the House of Commons, this time introducing a "Representation and Remonstrance from the General Assembly of New York." The document was temperately worded, freely acknowledging the sovereign authority of the crown, and dutiful in its submission. New York hitherto had been reluctant to associate itself with the more emphatic protests being registered by the colonies in general, but it now asked for the repeal of those acts that were, it was claimed, imposing an intolerable burden on free men and "subversive of the rights of English subjects." Again Burke begged the House to display its generosity before it was too late, and again North dismissed the plea with contempt. Burke moved "that the Representation and

Remonstrance of the General Assembly of the Colony of New York be brought up." North moved an amendment inserting after the word "Remonstrance," the clause, "in which the said Assembly claim to themselves rights derogatory to, and inconsistent with, the legislative authority of parliament."

Fox spoke, no longer with any hope of influencing North's conduct, but with unabated spirit. He pointed out that New York was the only province to which England could any longer look for substantial friendship, and that it had been foremost in counsels of forbearance to the other colonies. The petition of this province was now about not merely to be rejected, but to be refused a hearing. ". . . It is not suffered to be presented, no, not even to be read by the clerk. When they hear of this, they will be inflamed, and hereafter be as distinguished by their violence, as they have hitherto been by their moderation. It is the only method they can take to regain the esteem and confidence of their brethren in the other colonies, who have been offended at their moderation."

He repeated that it was not the right to tax in any circumstances that was being challenged, but the methods of imposition. It may be noted that this distinction, which may seem to us a very nebulous one, was, in fact, steadily maintained in the early stages of the dispute by the colonies themselves. Fox asserted that it was the abuse of a right and not the right itself that had driven most of the colonies to desperation, and now New York was to be similarly embittered. "The noble lord choses to be consistent; he is determined to make them all mad alike." North's amendment passed by a majority of 119 in a House of 253. Late at night (30 min. pt. 10 P.M.) the king had received the good news, and with fond iteration was writing to North that it showed "how firm the

House of Commons are in the support of the just rights of their country."

But news traveled slowly in those days, and unknown to the disputants in the House, the miserable business had already passed beyond the bounds of argument. On the very day of this debate, Benjamin Franklin was writing to Burke from Philadelphia: "You will see by the papers, that General Gage called his assembly to propose Lord North's pacific plan: but before they could meet, drew the sword and began the war. His troops made a most vigorous retreat—twenty miles in three hours—scarce to be paralleled in history; the feeble Americans who pelted them all the way, could scarce keep up with them." A fortnight later, May 28, Walpole recorded in his journal the arrival of "a light sloop sent by the Americans from Salem, with an account of their having defeated the King's troops."

On April 18, Gage had sent out eight hundred men to seize arms and ammunition that the insurrectionary militia were reported to have collected at Concord, eighteen miles from Boston. At Lexington the crown troops were met by a detachment of minute-men, and in the middle of the night the first shot of the war was fired, the celebrated shot, in fact, heard round the world. The next morning Concord was reached, and further skirmishing took place. A certain amount of the illicit ammunition was destroyed, but Franklin's version of the engagement was not much exaggerated. The heavier casualties were in the British ranks, and the prestige lost by the redcoats was never to be recovered on the continent of America. The minute-men were for the most part farmers, roughly armed and wholly undisciplined, and they had more than held their own against trained and fully equipped regulars.

Stimulated by this example, the spirit of resistance stiffened throughout the colonies. The issue was now going to be fought out in the field. The British crown was at last faced with the inevitable consequences of its own intolerant folly; it had now either to crush its American colonies or to lose them. Charles Fox and his friends, who continued to proclaim what they believed to be their own country's dishonor, were duly stigmatized as traitors. But in the light of history, if anything could more deeply humiliate English patriotism than the knowledge that we engaged in the American war of 1775, it would be that we had won it.

5

Charles had now been out of office a little over a year, and was already established as one of the ablest and most determined members of the opposition. His political support of Burke was attended by the ripening of a warm personal friendship.* At a moment when government action seemed likely to effect its purpose by intimidating the spirit of the colonies, he had written:

Newmarket, October 13, 1774

DEAR BURKE:

Though your opinions have turned out to be but too true, I am sure you will be far enough from triumphing in your foresight. What a dismal piece of news! and what a melancholy consideration for all thinking men, that no people, animated by what principle soever, can make a successful resistance to military discipline. I do not know that I was ever

*Sandwich was not elected to Brooks's until 1785, but a note in the Hinchingbrooke manuscripts reads, in the manner of the Bets Book of that Club: "July 19, 1774. Lord Sandwich has received five guineas from Mr. Fox, and the same sum from Mr. Richard Fitzpatrick, on condition that he pays fifty guineas to each of them whenever Mr Edmund Burke is Privy Councillor."

so affected by any public event, either in history or in life. The introduction of great standing armies into Europe has then made all mankind irrecoverably slaves. But to complain is useless, and I cannot bear to give the tories the triumph of seeing how dejected I am at heart. Indeed, I am not altogether so much so about the particular business in question, which I think very far from being decided, as I am from the sad figure that *men* make against *soldiers*. I have written to Lord Rockingham, to desire him to lose no time in adopting some plan of operations in consequence of this event . . . If the ministry were free agents, and had common sense, I think it not impossible but some good might be wrought out of this evil; I mean if they were to take this opportunity of making proper concessions. The Duke of Grafton does not despair of this, and, in that view, does not feel as I do about this news; but I believe he is very widely mistaken indeed; and everything I hear from London supports my opinion; for I am told the exultation is excessive. . . .

Yours ever very affectionately,

C. J. Fox.

The letter presents several points of interest. Its tone shows that the "Yours ever very affectionately" was no mere formality. Burke's intellectual power and courage were daily inspiration to the maturing genius of the younger man, and the intimacy was in itself a more than sufficient recompense to Charles for any sacrifice that he had made in breaking with North. Lord John Russell records the fact that Fox once said that he had learned more from Burke's conversation than from all the books he had ever read. The affection that he now conceived for the man who more than any other influenced the early years of his emancipation was never to be impaired, and, as we shall see, Burke's later renunciation of the

friendship was to be one of the deepest sorrows of Fox's life. We note, too, in Charles's announcement of his letter to Rockingham, the consideration that he was already receiving in the counsels of his party.

The American debates left North with no doubt that his old cadet was an extremely vexatious young person, a view that was cordially shared by the king. In his own opinion of his Majesty, Charles retained no illusions. "If the ministry were free agents" means clearly that he knows them not to be, and why. The quarrel was afterwards to mince no words, but for the present it smoldered in an atmosphere of tacit hostility.

George, indeed, was hardly yet at the necessity of acknowledging Mr. Fox as being worthy of his notice, and his disapproval appears only in a stray note or so. When his brother Stephen died, Charles inherited the sinecure of the clerkship of the Pells in Ireland. North wishing to buy this for one of his supporters, a bid was made and duly submitted to the king, who wrote: "As you are of opinion, from the enclosed state of the produce of the Clerk of the Pells in Ireland, that the bargain is not unreasonably advantageous to Mr. Fox, I give my consent to the finishing that affair." And when Richard Fitzpatrick, whose sister married Stephen Fox and who was known as one of Charles's familiar friends, was recommended for an appointment in the royal household, the king replied, "I do not chuse to fill my familly with professed gamesters."

The letter to Burke above all shows in its opening paragraphs the unfolding generosities of Fox's mind. Some readers may find the phrases a little heavy with the self-consciousness of youth, but no one can mistake them for the language of cant. The ill regulation of Charles's personal habits made him an easy mark for censure, and

the cartoonists were already busy with his fame. A swarthy complexion nicknamed him Niger, and a figure corpulent beyond his years was rich in lines grateful to to the professional pencils. At the end of 1773 the Oxford Magazine presented the public with a domestic scene of the Foxes in conclave. Lord Holland is gravely addressing his heir Stephen, whose filial respect appears to be dwindling into slumber, while at the other side of the table Charles, only a degree less rotund than his brother, is engaged in picking his father's pocket.

Modern zeal has ably seconded such agreeable conceits. Mr. Henry Belcher in his "First American Civil War" (1911), speaking of Fox at this time, observes that "the man's wickedness as to women and gambling and drinking made of him . . . little but an instrument of mischief," and quotes a fellow enthusiast as saying: "Fox's character, both public and private, was enough to make any man detest him. He was factious, dissolute, untrustworthy, a gambler, a voluptuary, a cynical sentimentalist, and a politician without principle or even scruple." Mr. Belcher elsewhere underlines his testimony with "Men like Sandwich, Grafton, Fox, and Dashwood would in these days be hounded out of public life for immorality"; and, in a high strain of true-blue fervor, with "Fox was the founder of that school of politics whose voice and hand are ever uplifted on behalf of every country but their own."

This last charge has been sufficiently answered in words already quoted from Sir James Mackintosh. If anyone chooses to see England betrayed in the parts taken by Fox and Burke in the debates against the disgraceful American policy of George III and his minister, let him. To many English readers of history, the one consolation to be derived from the gloomy spectacle of those days

is the superb courage of these men leading their little band of patriots against a denial of every decent instinct in the British character.

Of the more general indictment of Fox's political probity, we need only to remember what his place and emoluments might have been had he chosen to remain in the king's party, and what in fact they were. Thomas Wright in his "England Under the House of Hanover," speaking of his departure from the treasury, says with no more than the bare truth: "It is due to Fox's character to say, that from this moment he continued during his life steady and consistent in the political principles he now embraced."

That for many years Charles's private life was dissolute even by the standards of his own time, it is impossible to deny, and unprofitable to regret. He drank heavily, though not, it would seem, seriously beyond the capacity of a remarkable constitution; he gamed abominably. Of his intrigues with women it is easier to find airy censure by his detractors than other evidence. It could afford us no particular satisfaction to suppose that he was ascetically disinclined for gallantry, but that such affairs as he indulged were ever cruel or cynical there is no reason whatever to believe. Sir George Trevelyan reminds us that he loved Homer, because Homer "always spoke well of women"; and the same writer, whose epic of the English Whigs does honor to its great theme, adds with an authority that is not likely to be successfully challenged, words that I make no apology for quoting at length:

"Fox, from twenty to twenty-five, had doubtless not the air of a rigid moralist . . . But he did not add a paragraph to the chronicle of sin and misery in which companions, and relatives, of his own conspicuously figured.

A Lovelace never would have won, or valued, the enthusiastic friendship with which Fox was honoured by so many high-minded women, whose loyalty to his interests, at a great crisis, has furnished some of the most agreeable . . . anecdotes of English history . . . His notion of true gallantry was to treat women as beings who stood on the same intellectual tableland as himself; to give them the very best of his thoughts and his knowledge, as well as of his humour and his eloquence; to invite, and weigh, their advice in seasons of difficulty; and if ever they urged him to steps which his judgment or his conscience disapproved, not to elude them with half-contemptuous banter, but to convince them by plain-spoken and serious remonstrance." And then, yet more memorably: "There have been few better husbands than Fox, and probably none so delightful; for no man ever devoted such power of pleasing to the single end of making a wife happy."

How tenderly exact this encomium is we shall see later, but for the moment we have but to note that the scandal of Fox's private life gains very little momentum by examination in this respect. A further word of remarkable testimony may be added from one of Charles's own contemporaries. In 1834, John Cam Hobhouse was in the company of James Maitland, Earl of Lauderdale, then an old man of seventy-five, who had shrewdly observed the public life of two generations and had himself fought stoutly in the cause of liberal opinion. He had served under Fox, and told Hobhouse that only once had he ever had to explain a subject twice to his chief, and added, "Charles Fox was not only the most extraordinary man I have even seen, but also the best man."

When, however, each moralist has balanced this account as he will, it remains for us to keep one consider-

ation firmly in view. Whatever the measure of Charles's delinquencies, they at no time, from the date of his early rupture with North, weakened the resolution or affected the integrity of his public life. For years he stood by an unpopular cause, with his talents fettered and his ambitions unrewarded. And in the long run, while he hardly ever knew what it was to command an effective majority, his own minority honored him with a devotion such as few statesmen have been able to inspire.

CHAPTER VII

The American Revolution

1775-1777

I

THE SUMMER AND AUTUMN OF 1775 WERE DISASTROUS to the English government. Bribery and threats were able to bring no more than four hundred recruits to the colors. Foreign levies were attempted, and there was one wild project for hiring twenty thousand Russian troops. Civic addresses against the war, chiefly representing mercantile interests, were met by counter-addresses furtively organized by the ministers and often handsomely paid for. Parliament rose at the end of May, and remained in recess until the end of October. The administration continued to be voluble in threats, and prosecuted them with a total want of capacity or design. North, "of astonishingly gay insolence," who had neither devised the war nor liked it, "but liked his place, whatever he pretended," faced the consequences of his pliancy to the king's commands by "taking his pleasure in the country."

Burke, writing to a friend in July, said, "Things look gloomy. However, they have a more cheerful aspect to those who know them better; for I am told by one who has lately seen Lord North, that he has never seen him or anybody else in higher spirits." And in August he wrote to the Marquis of Rockingham this of the king: "Nothing can equal the ease, composure, and even gaiety, of the great disposer of all in this lower orb. It is too much,

if not real, for the most perfect King-craft." Supplies on a large scale were ordered, and in many instances lay for weeks rotting in the London docks. In August the crown issued a proclamation officially declaring the colonists to be rebels, and Wilkes, now, to the indignation of the court, Lord Mayor of London, declined to lend horses for the use of the heralds in the City.

In the meantime, while the government had been blandly unaware of the magnitude of the task they had set themselves, and had given no signs of being able to accomplish any task at all, the Americans had addressed themselves to a state of war with competent determination. In the forlorn years that were to follow, they were often enough to be the despair of their leaders, but they took up the struggle in a spirit of well regulated efficiency.

In June, a congress of the states appointed George Washington commander-in-chief of the colonial forces. He was offered two thousand pounds a year, and five pounds a day for table-money, but while accepting the allowance refused the pay. Addressing congress on June 15, he said: "But lest some unlucky event should happen unfavourable to my reputation, I beg it may be remembered by every gentleman in the room, that I this day declare with the utmost sincerity, I do not think myself equal to the command I am honoured with. As to pay, Sir, as no pecuniary consideration could have tempted me to accept this arduous employment, at the expense of my domestic ease and happiness, I do not wish to make any profit from it. I will keep an exact account of my expenses. These I doubt not they will discharge, and that is all I desire."

He had served for fifteen years in the Virginian house of burgesses, and was already known far beyond

his own state for the authority and just measure of his speech. A magnificent physique—Lincoln with six feet four could give him only an inch—and an enthusiastic sportsman, the man who was to found a nation under arms against England, was in his bearing and habits a characteristic type of the English country gentleman, bred in traditions of patriarchal pride and courtesy, self-sufficient, liberal in his pleasures, and severe in his views of responsibility.

As Washington traveled north to take up his duties at Boston, he was met by a messenger with news of the battle of Bunker Hill, which had been fought on June 17. The high hopes of Lexington had been confirmed. The British troops might claim a victory, but their losses had again exceeded those of the Americans, and again it had been shown that if the colonials could add discipline to their courage, they might with confidence face any antagonists in the field. A few days later, at the head of the army, he issued an order to the troops of "The United Provinces of North America."

The king addressed his assembled parliament on October 26. He said that the Americans "designed to establish an independent empire," which even at this date there was no evidence that they did; that the government had received offers of foreign assistance, which they had not; that the government had made conciliatory proposals, omitting to add that these proposals had been passed only on the express assurance that there was no intention of making them effective; and that they were about to send out commissioners to treat with the Americans, omitting here also to add that there was not the slightest possibility of the Americans having anything further to do with the present administration. On the address of thanks being moved, Lord John Cavendish proposed an amend-

ment to the effect that the government was corrupt and incapable, and calling for a drastic investigation of "the most effectual means of restoring order to the distracted affairs of the British Empire, confidence to His Majesty's government, obedience, by a prudent and temperate use of its powers, to the authority of parliament, and satisfaction and happiness to all his people," trusting by this to avoid "the alarming and dangerous expedient of calling in foreign forces to the support of His Majesty's authority within his own dominions, and the still more dreadful calamity of shedding British blood by British hands."

In the debate that followed, Fox called upon North, "a blundering pilot," to resign. The minister had culpably withheld information from the House, he had misled the people, his military undertakings had miscarried, and he had contemptibly tried to shift the blame from himself to General Gage. Instead of being contrite in this deplorable situation, he seemed to exult. He had, indeed, reason to congratulate himself on an extraordinary exploit—he had contrived to lose more in one campaign than Alexander, Cæsar, Marlborough, and Pitt had ever won. He himself, foolishly deceived by government assurances that with the arrival of troops in America the revolt would cease, had voted for their dispatch. "Peace was my object; but now that the minister has declared himself for war, I cannot but oppose his proceedings. I cannot consent to the bloodly consequences of so silly a contest about so silly an object, conducted in the silliest manner that history, or observation, has ever furnished an instance of; and from which we are likely to derive nothing but poverty, disgrace, defeat, and ruin."

The amendment was defeated by the usual majority, which, however, lacked one echo of approval in the Lords. Even if the venom of Junius be discounted, Augustus

Henry Fitzroy, third Duke of Grafton, makes no very pretty figure of a man. The notoriety of his undergraduate days had been amply sustained in later life, and his many indiscretions reached an effective climax when as prime minister he took his mistress to the Opera House in the presence of the queen. On one occasion he instituted proceedings against someone who had offered him five thousand pounds for a place, making an unexpected demonstration of virtue, until Junius exposed the fact that he had recently sold a place of the same kind, when the prosecution was withdrawn. It was, indeed, on account of their invective against Grafton that the famous letters achieved a great part of their success. "There are some hereditary strokes af character by which a family may be as clearly distinguished as by the blackest features of the human face. Charles the First lived and died a hypocrite. Charles the Second was a hypocrite of another sort, and should have died upon the same scaffold. At the distance of a century, we see their different characters happily revived, and blended in your grace. Sullen and severe without religion, profligate without gaiety, you live like Charles the Second, without an amiable companion, and, for aught I know, may die as his father did, without the reputation of a martyr." The savagery was not lessened by its contact with reality. The duke's record was a bad one, and he was "his Grace" very much by courtesy. An early biographer, writing within ten years of his death, and inclined to allow his subject what merit he can, confesses: "In manners and person he was equally disagreeable; his countenance being heavy and saturnine, and his deportment haughty, sullen, and repulsive." He patronized the unfortunate Robert Bloomfield, and as chancellor of Cambridge University made Gray professor of history, amiabilities that at least may stand to his credit.

But with all his deficiencies, he was a nobleman of some parts and a good deal of influence, and his support was valuable. It may even be that the prejudice—a very violent prejudice—of Junius was chastening his victim for no more than faults that were notoriously common to the age, and that Grafton was conspicuous for villainy only in that angry imagination. It is certain that Fox, who flattered nobody, was later to use expressions that leave us with a picture strangely unlike that of Junius's painting.

2

Grafton, who had once led the government, was now lord privy seal under North. A few days before the opening of parliament in October, 1775, Fox was dining with the duke at Newmarket, and was astonished to hear his host exclaim openly against the government's American policy. No pledge of secrecy was asked or given, and the next day town gossip was busy with the rumor that the session would open with the lord privy seal in opposition. Grafton, being taxed by his colleagues, hedged, and wrote to Charles saying that, while he was confident that Fox had not misrepresented his words, plainly somebody had. Fox, doubtless, had confided in a third party who, doubtless also, was responsible for the corrupt version. Charles went forthwith to Newmarket to answer the challenge, and before the duke could speak, said, "My Lord, I will save your Grace trouble, and repeat what I have said." The repetition coincided with the public report, and Grafton was compelled to admit, "Sir, you have repeated my words more exactly than I could myself," and then added, "Still, I desire not to be thought out of humour: Lord North and the ministers have been very civil to me; I only disapprove of all their measures."

North had, in fact, been anything but civil to him. Grafton had already written to his chief—once his subordinate—criticizing government measures affecting the colonies, and North had left the letter unanswered. It is possible that Grafton delivered his outburst at Newmarket piqued by this neglect. But, whatever the inducement, the consequence was that the king sent for him and required an explanation. The duke, whether of candor or necessity, confessed his disagreement, and two days later, opposed the speech from the throne. The junto took a fortnight to deliberate upon this enormity, at the end of which time Grafton was ordered to deliver up the privy seal. Thenceforth he voted against North's government.

If the opposition was badly disciplined, its chiefs did not follow the indolent example of the government. Burke wrote to Rockingham in August, "This is no time for taking public business in their course and order, and only as a part of the scheme of life, which comes and goes at its proper periods, and is mixed in with occupations and amusements. It calls for the whole of the best of us; and everything else, however just or even laudable at another time, ought to give way to this great, urgent, instant concern." And Burke himself was indefatigable, canvassing his constituents at Bristol, corresponding with Franklin and other American leaders, receiving deputations, begging the great men of his own party, Rockingham—as in this letter—the Dukes of Richmond and Portland, and the rest of them, to spare no effort to avert the threatened disasters, disasters of which, indeed, there was already more than a threat. These men, Burke and Fox and a few others, did desire peace and their country's honor, with a passion that never for a moment inspired the government's prosecution of war. And to this end they did give "the whole of the best of them." A charming letter

written by the Duke of Richmond to Burke in November tells its own tale:

> My dear Burke,
>
> When you promised me to sit for your picture to Mr. Romney, you only desired not to begin it till after you had got rid of your conciliatory motion. I doubt not but you have now some other business of great importance on your hands; but if I wait for my picture till you have nothing to do, I am likely to go without it.

The motion in question was brought forward by Burke on November 16, and in general terms followed the proposal that he had so brilliantly and so unavailingly advanced in the preceding March. On this occasion Richard Fitzpatrick and his brother, the Earl of Ossory, were persuaded by Fox to abandon their support of the government. "I am sure," he had written to Ossory on the 5th, "if you do think seriously enough of this matter to let your opinion regulate your conduct, it is impossible but you must consider this as the true opportunity of declaring yourself. It does not need surely the tenth part of your good sense to see how cruel and intolerable a thing it is to sacrifice thousands of lives almost without prospect of advantage." Charles himself, according to Walpole, "outshone himself, made a very pathetic eulogium of the two brothers, and a very humorous description of the Treasury Bench."

On the 20th North introduced a bill to prohibit trading with America and to empower the king's subjects "to seize and destroy all American vessels." Fox protested against this continued policy of attempting to carry on war by acts of parliament. He disapproved of the war generally but, assuming its justice, thought nothing still could exceed the folly of ministers in conducting it. "In order to induce the Americans to submit to your legis-

lature, you pass laws against them, cruel and tyrannical in the extreme. If they complain of one law, your answer to their complaint is to pass another more rigorous than the former. But they are in rebellion, you say; if so, treat them as rebels are wont to be treated. Send out your fleets and armies against them, and subdue them, but let them have no reason to complain of your laws. Show them that your laws are just, mild, and equitable, that they are therefore in the wrong, and deserve the punishment they meet with. The very contrary of this has been your wretched policy." The lash of this inexorable logic produced no effect; North hardly turned in his sleep as Fox sat down, and the vote on division was announced as 143 for the bill, 38 against. So secure, indeed, was the government in its abuse of power, that when on the 22nd Fox moved that an account of the expenses incurred by the British army in America be laid before the House, the motion was negatived without a division at all. And so disheartened was the opposition by this constant failure to make an inch of headway, that on the final reading of North's prohibitory bill in December, the minority could muster only sixteen votes. At the end of November Walpole could write of Charles as the "only active man in the Opposition," but complained that he "would not give up his dissolute life, sat up all night, and was seldom out of bed before two in the afternoon." It does not appear that Charles was incapacitated by these unconventional but apparently not irregular hours, though it must be allowed that he sometimes seemed a little uneasy about himself.

In a debate at this time he asserted that it was not fit to trust the militia to men who were urging the king to make war on his own people, whereupon an angry Tory replied that it was fitter than to trust it to "men who

had ruined themselves by the most scandalous vices." The House did not much like the personality, and showed signs of disapproval. Charles stood up, and modestly told the House that it was wrong; that the previous speaker was justified of his reproof; that he was conscious of his private errors, and wished he might be able to atone for them.

3

The new year, 1776, opened with prospects gloomy enough to all but such as were blinded by complacent obstinacy, like the king, or by apathy, like North. Walpole summarized the situation with his usual shrewdness: "If America gets the better, it will be independent, or will not return to us without effectuating by stipulation a total change of Administration, and a blow to despotism. If Britain prevails, it cannot be but by ruining the towns and trade of America, and by wasting the King's fleet, armies, and treasure, his best means of despotism. . . . No case can happen in which, if the King prevails, he will not be a far less potent monarch than before the war." North informed a credulous public that France and Spain had given solemn assurances of neutrality, but no candid and intelligent mind for a moment supposed that either of those powers would hesitate to take advantage of any misfortune that might befall the British crown. Under Lord George Germain, who, in the cabinet changes consequent upon Grafton's resignation, had become secretary of state for the colonies, a new but by no means effective vigor was imparted to the conduct of the war. Inefficient commanders were capriciously sent out, and as capriciously exonerated on recall, bad news was suppressed and good freely manufactured, service was bought and promotion sold, an illusion of trade pros-

perity was created by a reckless distribution of war contracts, mob feeling, inflamed by patriotic falsehoods, drowned or intimidated criticism; and while North during the recess allowed no public business to disturb the domestic amenities of Bushey, the king continued to derive the utmost satisfaction from almost everything that happened.

On February 20, Fox exposed this record of mismanagement and deception in a speech that disregarded the origins of the war and dwelt only on its progress. He was able to show that there was no trustworthy evidence that anything was going well, while there was ample evidence to show that a great deal was going badly. He argued that if it could be shown that ministers had discharged their duties faithfully, then the blame must attach to officers in the field; if, on the other hand, it could be shown that the officers had dutifully obeyed commands and made the best possible use of resources placed at their disposal, then the ministers must be held responsible. In either case the nation had a right to know where the fault lay, and he moved "That it be referred to a Committee to enquire into the Causes of the Ill Success of His Majesty's Arms in North America." The motion was lost by 240 votes to 104.

Charles, who at the age of twenty-seven was already becoming the most effective voice of the opposition, was astutely ringing the changes in his method of attack. At intervals he reasserted his objections to the war as an evil conception; then for a time he would be silent on that topic, and confine his censure to the incompetence of ministers in their own designs. It might be suggested that if he really thought justice was with the American cause, nothing could have pleased him better than that the government should lose the war with as much dispatch as

possible. The answer is twofold. Fox did not want to lose the war. He did not want it to be lost or won by anybody; he wanted it to be stopped. He was convinced that whatever happened, there was neither advantage nor honor in it for his country. He realized, however, that merely to persist in the demand that North—and the king—should stop it, would be to go on forever whistling jigs to milestones. So long as North remained in power the war would go on unless ended by some capital disaster, and there was no hope of removing him by indicting a policy for which he had been able to secure the support of popular feeling. There was but one possible means of discrediting the minister, which was to make his misconduct of the war notorious. No great hope in that, perhaps, but in that or nowhere. Had Fox and his friends succeeded in their purpose of forcing North to resign, it is clear that the efficient prosecution of the war would have disappeared from their program, but in the meantime no other purpose could occupy them, and there was no other way of achieving it. It was a shrewd piece of political speculation, for which Fox was chiefly responsible. North's power was secure against onsets on his policy; as it turned out, it was even able to survive a long succession of grave administrative blunders; but Fox was right in seeing that for a time the blunders and not the policy were the most promising mark at which to aim.

In March the Dukes of Richmond and Grafton separately moved addresses in the Lords against the war, and were heavily defeated. In that month also Washington drove the British troops out of Boston. It is not within the scope of this study to show the action of the American war in any detail. It is enough to say at this point that until the surrender of General Burgoyne at Saratoga in October, 1777, the actual advantage in the field commonly

lay with the British, and that no far-sighted observer was ever deluded by such advantage into the belief that British arms could prevail in the end. And yet the situation of the Americans was often so desperately critical that anything like real efficiency in the crown command and government might at any time have struck a blow that without being decisive would have put a long period to American resistance in the field. In the early days of the war, Washington's army before Boston was undisciplined, constantly disorganized by the system of short enlistments, demoralized by domestic jealousies between the states, and quite inadequately armed. At one time he had two thousand men in camp without muskets. A determined attack in force on such troops could have had but one result. But the determination and the force alike were lacking. Washington wrote that if he escaped destruction, he should religiously believe that the hand of Providence was in it to blind the eyes of his enemies.

On April 24 the king wrote to North: "The hearing that the loan and taxes have passed this day without a division gives me infinite satisfaction. That Opposition debated at large on American measures instead of objecting to the business is a convincing proof that your proposals were just." The explanation was that North, on the occasion of reading his budget, had caused the strangers' gallery to be opened. By a standing order the gallery had been closed to the public throughout the session, the opposition asserting, no doubt with justice, that this was with a view to keeping the people ignorant of such unfavorable news from America as the ministers might be forced to divulge. It was now submitted by Fox that North had overruled the order to suit his own convenience, it being a day upon which these dangerous colonial topics were not to be introduced, and therefore

one upon which his Lordship could safely admit the public to hear what he chose to say. That being so, Fox took leave to observe that he should vote against the financial proposals now before them, and that he thought it proper that the public should also know the precise grounds upon which he had come to this decision. The government might complain that this was irregular, but the government had itself to thank. He thereupon proceeded to give a brilliant and destructive survey of North's American policy as a whole, and characterized the pursuance of the war as "bloodthirsty and oppressive." He would not vote for the supply of money for "so ignoble a purpose as the carrying on a war commenced unjustly, and supported with no other view than to the extirpation of freedom, and the violation of every social comfort." As for the budget resolutions, he perfectly saw the noble lord's point in declaring that a subject was greatly obliged when he was taxed four shillings in the pound, since he was allowed to keep the other sixteen for himself.

But though they continued to record large majorities or pass their measures unchallenged, the ministers could collect little but cold comfort. The news of the evacuation of Boston, and unpropitious intelligence from the French court, caused North to exclaim in a moment of candor, "I wish the time were come for my being abused for having made a disgraceful peace with America." In June, Charles was similarly depressed by tidings of Canadian successes that might encourage the government, but he wrote to Ossory, "Let us still maintain the Whig cause, however discredited by defeats, to be the only true principle for this country." Ten days later the "Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled," issued the Declaration of Independence.

4

It must be remembered that this famous instrument was drawn in the heat of bitter conflict. Some of its clauses hardly bear examination in the light of historical reason; it was, in fact, as a modern writer * has admirably said, "less a declaration of independence than a declaration of war—less an assertion of right than a cry of defiance." It was made at a moment when the American arms were in a state of extreme precariousness, and yet a moment when the American spirit was somehow conscious that it was now destined for independence, be the conclusion of the argument by arms what it might. It is no paradox to say that if after July 4, 1776, George III had been able to win his war, the declaration framed by Thomas Jefferson would still have become effective.

During the summer the hopes of the crown were raised by successes which, however, still remained inconclusive. The colonists failed in an invasion of Canada, and lost sixteen hundred men in a heavy defeat on Long Island. But the fruits of victory never seemed to be gathered by leaders who, having shown their valor in the field, were content to leave it at that. "'I do not know," said North, "whether our Generals frighten the enemy, but I know that whenever I think of them, they frighten me." There came, too, news of reverses. On one such occasion a colleague went to Bushey Park to condole with North, whom he found unaccountably cheerful. "Faith, my lord, if fretting would make me thin, I would be as sour as your Grace; but since it will not have that effect, I bear it as well as I can." The king also bore it as well as he could. Once he wrote to North, "I have this moment

* John Malcolm Ludlow, *The War of American Independence.* London and New York.

received your letter, which throws me into the greatest state of uneasiness I ever felt." These, indeed, were difficult days, full of dangers that might well wring such a cry from the father of his people. But the trouble was not America; the king had promised an earldom to someone who was already a duke, and now learnt that North desired the earldom for someone else, in fact had given his word for it. Matter for distress indeed. North really must come at once; "I cannot go to my levee, nor see any mortal, till you have been here." In September, Fox wrote to Ossory observing that, whatever the news, it was plain that Washington and congress were in perfect agreement, and that they were together confident of overcoming all difficulties. "Is it not charming, their setting about their new government so deliberately in the face, as it were, of the enemy?" In the same month, while the king's Hanoverians, for whose loan to Great Britain he claimed nothing but to be "reimbursed all expenses," were arriving in America, the king's statues were being melted down by the colonials to make bullets.

The Rockingham Whigs, weary of ineffectual opposition, were now considering the advisability of absenting themselves from parliament as an alternative form of protest, a course which was later to be taken by the body of the party. On October 13, 1776, Fox wrote a remarkable letter to Rockingham, which is so characteristic as to call for extensive quotation; Charles's correspondent was twenty years his senior:

My dear Lord,

Though I am far from being dismayed by the terrible news from Long Island, I cannot help thinking that it ought, with what will naturally follow it, to have considerable influence upon our counsels, and that we ought, under the present circumstances, to pursue a conduct somewhat different from

that which was projected at Wentworth. A secession at present would be considered as a running away from the conquerors, and we should be thought to give up a cause which we think no longer tenable. But the more I am convinced that a secession is become improper, the clearer I am that it has become still more necessary than ever to produce some manifesto, petition, or public instrument, upon the present situation of affairs; either to exhort His Majesty to make the proper use of his victory, by seizing this opportunity of making advantageous offers of accommodation, or to express openly and fairly to him the well-grounded apprehensions every man must entertain from the power of the Crown, in case His Majesty should be able to subdue the American continent by the force of his arms. Above all, my dear Lord, I hope that it will be a point of honour among us all to support the American pretensions in adversity as much as we did in their prosperity, and that we shall never desert those who have acted *unsuccessfully* upon Whig principles. . . . Whatever is intended, I am sure it is not necessary for me to press upon your Lordship the expediency of using every means possible to have a great attendance on the 31st.* . . . I am so clear that firmness in Whig principles is become more necessary than ever, that I cannot help conjuring you, over and over again, to consider the importance of this crisis. In regard to myself I dare hope that professions are unnecessary. . . . I am resolved . . . to maintain that if America should be at our feet (which God forbid!), we ought to give them as good terms (at least) as those offered in Burke's proposition.

These veiled misgivings were not groundless. Rockingham was energetic and stanch in parliament, but a dilatory and indecisive leader outside. An example of his inertness had occurred but a few days before the date of Charles's letter. The Mayor and Corporation of York had presented an unchallenged address of congratulation to the king on the victory of Long Island; and Yorkshire was the seat of Rockingham's most powerful connection.

On October 31, in the debate on the speech from the

* When parliament was to be opened.

throne, which dwelt at length on the enormity of the revolted provinces in defying a mild and benevolent government, a number of speakers made effective play of the king's ambiguity, and stated the opposition case with great spirit. "The whole strength of this country had been tried," said one, "and had produced only a Declaration of Independence . . . The idea of marching through the continent of America was absurd . . . Were not the army and fleet now in America at the mercy of the French?" Others inquired what terms the House had to offer to the Americans. Had they any terms? Were the present measures Lord North's, or were they forced upon him? We had called in foreign assistance—might not the Americans do the same? General Gage had issued a proclamation against hypocrisy—it ought in justice to be executed on his Majesty's ministers. Did these ministers ever take a walk in the London streets, where over eight hundred men had been seized by the press-gang in less than a month? Wilkes hereupon interpolated a remark that the press officers had more regard for their own skins than to enter the precincts of the City, where Liberty was still respected. He added that ministers considered themselves very knowing in that they had prophesied that American iniquity would proceed even as far as separation; if it came to that, the Jesuits had prophesied the death of Henry IV within the year, and had hired Ravaillac to murder him. There was but one proper course open to the government, to repeal all oppressive acts and to recall the army.

At first North offered no reply; he even started to leave the House, when he was arrested by indignant cries. He then delivered a speech halting between bluster and evasion. If they were patient, some of the colonies would doubtless break off from the confederation; certainly

there was no reason to believe in the hostile intention of any foreign power; it was true that we were manning guard ships—partly manning them, that was to say—but he hoped earnestly that this could be regarded as a precaution merely; the oppressive acts were a necessary consequence of insults received; and the gentlemen of the opposition might consider themselves very fortunate that they lived in a land of liberty, as otherwise they would have reason to lament the melancholy consequences to themselves of their highly improper observations. This speech, in which random assertion was unsupported by any fragment of evidence, was, in words written eighty years after the event, in itself "a full condemnation of the Ministry." A member reminded North that he had formerly said, "Let France and Spain both interfere, this country was ready to face them." Did his Lordship abide still by the boast? Lord George Germain took up the defense. Surely everybody knew that the legislative power in New York was on the point of asking for peace. Did not everybody know that? Then everybody ought to. And what was all this about French preparations? He had heard of none. And must we ask leave of France and Spain to control our own colonies? It fell to Fox to answer Lord George.

5

In what Walpole described as "one of his finest and most animated orations," Charles swept over the policy and the argument of the government in a cascade of wit and passion. The House had been asked for unanimity—in what? in measures that had been uniformly attended with the mischief that had been predicted. Every step in American policy had been dictated by our own obstinate folly. "When the late severe laws were passed against

the Americans, they were thrown into anarchy; they declared we had abdicated the government, and were therefore at liberty to choose a government for themselves." As to the legislative power of New York, everyone knew perfectly well that it was functioning in the shadow of a garrison of our men thirty thousand strong, and who would take any notice of resolutions passed under pressure of that kind—who, especially, among the Americans themselves?

His Lordship (North) told them that the king's chief desire was to restore law and liberty to America. Why, then, were these ever disturbed? There they had "reigned till the abominable doctrine of gaining money by taxes infatuated the heads of our statesmen. Why did you destroy the fair work of so many ages, in order to reestablish that by the sword, which prudence and the good government of the country, had seemed to fix for ever?" And now, how was this happy time to be reestablished? "By the bayonets of disciplined Germans." They had further been informed that it was not to the interest of France and Spain to have America independent. "Sir, I deny it, and say it is contrary to every principle of common sense. Is not the division of the enemy's power advantageous? Is not a free country engaged in trade less formidable than the ambition of an old corrupted government, their only formidable rival in Europe? The noble lord who moved the amendment said that we were in the dilemma of conquering or abandoning America: if we are reduced to that, I am for abandoning America. What have been the advantages of America to this kingdom? Extent of trade, increase of commercial advantages, and a numerous people growing up in the same ideas and sentiments as ourselves. Now, Sir, would those advantages accrue to us if America was

conquered? Not one of them!" Gibbon, who was present, stated that he had never heard a more masterly speech than that delivered by Fox on this occasion. Burke wrote to a friend, "I never knew Charles Fox better, or indeed anyone, on any occasion. His speech was a noble performance." On dividing, the government defeated the amendment by 242 votes to 87. And the next day the king wrote to North that he had been "infinitely amused" by the accounts of the debate.

Rockingham led the opposition motion in the Lords, and upon defeat retired with his party, and appeared no more in parliament during the session when American business was on hand. Fox, however, had not yet formally allied himself with the Rockingham Whigs, and continued to fight his cause in the Commons. On November 6, members learned, not from ministers but from a public print, that commissioners had been sent out with power to treat with the Americans, and that a royal declaration offering to discuss conditions of peace had actually been issued in New York. The situation thus created was full of possibilities, and Fox seized them. The declaration assumed a pacific tone, and signified that the king was most graciously pleased "to direct a revision of such of his royal instructions as may be construed to lay an improper restraint upon the freedom of legislation in any of his colonies, and to concur in the revival of all his acts by which his subjects there may think themselves aggrieved." That seemed to be going very far, but Fox and his friends had no reason to believe in the good faith of the government, and they improvised a crucial test. If the government sincerely meant to promote this temper, members of opposition would certainly place no obstacles in the way of a solution that they had themselves so long sought. But at the outset let the sincerity be established.

Why, asked Fox, had this highly important intelligence been conveyed to them in a newspaper? Ministers had in many matters shown themselves to be capricious, but in their contempt for parliament at least they had been uniformly consistent. Victories were paraded to stimulate public opinion, but of information on other matters—these alleged peace overtures for example—the House was honored with none. By what right did the administration issue an instrument of this capital importance without the consent, or even the knowledge, of parliament? Was not the declaration itself an undertaking to do something that could not be done without that consent? Could ministers for a moment complain if members judged them by their conduct in the House? And what in that conduct was there that lent a touch of plausibility to the professions of this New York declaration? A repeal of the obnoxious acts was proposed. Had not ministers been asked time and time again to repeal them, and had they not always flatly refused? "In America, it seems, all is peace, conciliation, and parental tenderness; in England nothing is heard of but subjugation, unconditional submission, and a war of conquest.* What conceivably could be the purpose of this wholly irregular secrecy? Was it not that the government knew perfectly well that these promises of reform would no longer make any impression on a people that had declared its independence, and had learned from sad experience what such promises were worth? And knowing this, had not the government, wishing, when convenient, to point to its conciliatory advances, feared to take parliament into its confidence lest

* Washington himself had written in April: "The account . . . of the favourable disposition in the Ministry to accommodate matters, does not correspond with their speeches in Parliament."

the farcical pretense should be exposed? It was doubtful whether America could by any means at this stage be saved to the empire, but it was certain that it could not be saved by promises. The only hope lay in immediate and decisive action. It was useless to promise repeal; the only remaining hope was here and now to make repeal an accomplished fact. That was the test to which the sincerity of the ministry must now be put, and to that end Lord John Cavendish's motion lay before them: "That this House will resolve itself into a committee to consider of the revisal of all acts of parliament, by which His Majesty's subjects in America think themselves aggrieved." Defeat that motion, said Fox, and America must "plainly perceive, that the Commons of Great Britain had peremptorily refused to concur in rendering His Majesty's gracious dispositions effective."

If Charles in his speech of October 31 had risen to oratorical greatness, it is doubtful whether parliament had ever heard a more withering dialectical display than the one upon which he now paused. But North was not easily withered. He had neither credit to gain, nor credit to lose. A better man, a more sensitive man, even a stupider man, must have felt his honor at stake under this logical and relentless inquisition. But North felt nothing of the kind. He complained that this was a surprise maneuver, "no business of consequence having been expected before the recess," which we may remark was not due to begin until four weeks later. That the information now acquired by members from the columns of the Gazette was also a surprise, he did not condescend to notice. Opposition was really very inconsiderate. He might even use a stronger expression. The motion should now be put, which it was, and the yeas told 47 to 109 noes.

6

Charles decided that he too had said all that could profitably be said for the moment. The profit, indeed, was not apparent; every day showed more clearly that the court was wholly inaccessible to ideas of any kind. But that he was beginning to ruffle even royal composure is pleasingly divulged in a waspish little note written on November 15 at 49 min. pt. 6 P.M.: "Lord North . . . I learnt from Lord Weymouth that Charles Fox had declared at Arthur's last night that he should attend the business of the House this day, and either tomorrow or Sunday should set out for Paris, and not return till after the recess. I think, therefore, you cannot do better than bring as much forward during the time Parliament shall be assembled as can with propriety be done, as real business is never so well considered as when the attention of the House is not taken up by noisy declamations." So that the sustained pressure of over two years was producing a deeper effect than might be supposed from the incurious torpor of the treasury bench. George III was himself the fount of all ministerial obstinacy, but, unlike his ministers, he was at least awake.

Charles went to Paris with Richard Fitzpatrick, lost large sums of money at the tables and spent some time with Madame du Deffand. That celebrated wit and leader of Parisian literary fashion, who was now nearly eighty and blind, formed an unfavorable but singularly undiscerning opinion of her guest. She disliked his gaming, conjectured that he drank above her standard, and was shocked to find that impecuniosity and inability to pay his debts caused him no apparent anxiety. He was, she feared, a bad example to *la jeunesse*. In fact, although

she desired Walpole to report that she had spoken well of him, she found his moral character very unsatisfactory, perhaps with insufficient regard to her own history. On the other hand, she allowed that he had candor and a good heart. The balance in this respect was no doubt truly struck by madame herself when she said that Fox seemed to her "un sublime extravagant," and she to him "une platte moraliste." But other judgments that she passed merely show that her venerable Parisian mind was insensible to the gifts and promise of this English youth. He had spirit but no acumen; he had no principles, and pitied those who had; he had no thought for the morrow (he was twenty-eight, and busy); he had an undistinguished mind; he had neither taste nor knowledge, he was crude and uncultivated; he showed no promise of development in anything but audacity; and he would always neglect accomplishments and learning for which he had no immediate need.* The miscalculation is surprising in a woman of so much wit. We cannot help surmising that she knew a little better than that. Had Charles, perhaps, in an unguarded moment allowed her to suspect that he thought her "an insipid moralist"? Once, in 1777, she saw at least that here was something formidable: "Votre Charles Fox n'est pas un homme; il a l'audace d'un Cromwell."

7

On his return to London, Fox found fresh matter for his attention. North was introducing a bill to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act in respect of the "Crime of High Treason committed in North America, or on the High Seas." Rockingham, Burke, and their party still absented

* These opinions are summarized from letters of different dates, extending from 1769 to 1777.

themselves from parliament, but Fox refused to follow their lead. On February 10, 1777, he attacked the bill in the House. He argued that "it was nothing less than robbing America of her franchises, as a previous step to the introduction of the same system of government in this country." Let the House sanction this measure, and another would inevitably be taken under which no man among them would be safe. Any knowledge of autocratic government will tell us that Fox did not exaggerate the danger.

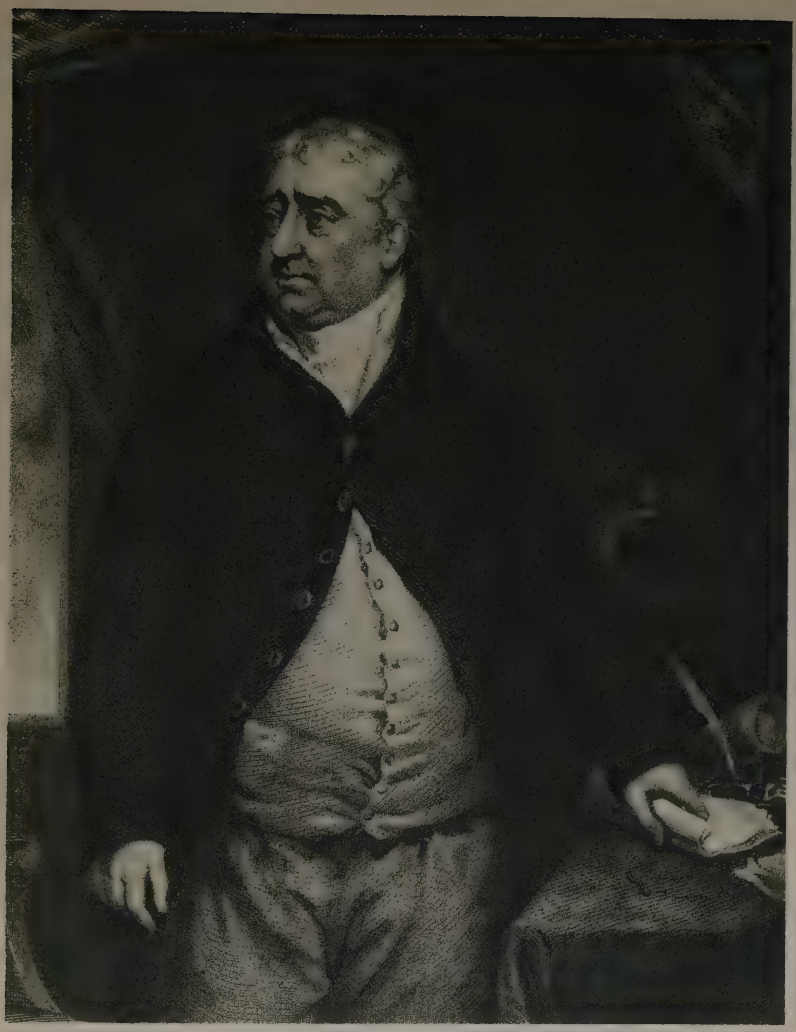
Never was wit more convincingly employed than in his figure of what might, what assuredly would happen if this infringement of an age-old charter were not arrested. "Who knows but the ministers, in the fullness of their malice, may take it into their heads that I have served on Long Island, under General Washington? What would it avail me in such an event to plead an *alibi*; to assure my old friends that I was, during the whole of the campaign, in England; that I was never in America, nor on any sea but between Dover and Calais . . . ? All this may be very true, says a minister . . . you are for the present suspected, that is sufficient . . . this is not the time for proof; you may be, and very probably are, innocent; what of that? This Bill cares not a fig whether you are guilty or innocent. I send you, under this sign manual, to study the Erse language in the Isle of Bute; and as soon as the operation of the Bill is spent, you will be at liberty to return whither you please; and then you may, if you like, call on your accusers to prove their charges . . . but they will laugh in your face, and tell you they never charged you, they only suspected you." He proceeded to point out that it was further suggested by the proposers that treason might be interpreted to cover even correspondence with the Americans. "Suppose, for instance,

I had an old school-fellow or intimate companion [in America]: I should most probably have kept up a correspondence . . . and have told him that the Whigs . . . were looked upon now as factious persons, for these are the times that large strides are taken, not only to destroy the liberties of America, but of this country likewise. Would not such a paragraph as this furnish a good ground for suspicion? . . . Ministers are credulous in the extreme, because they are fearful . . . from a consciousness of their crimes. . . . I am not surprised at anything. The tone of the Minister is become firm, loud, and decisive. He has already assured us, in this House, that he has nearly subdued America; and by what we are able to collect from this Bill, we may presume he means to extend his conquests nearer home."

The debate lasted several days, and the alarm caused by the arbitrary nature of the bill brought a few of the abstaining Whigs back to their posts. An opposition amendment, expressly providing that the measure should not apply to offenses or suspected offenses committed in Great Britain was, to the indignant surprise of his fanatical followers, accepted by North. Charles congratulated him, sincerely, and the Tory protests rose to a shriller pitch. One ornament of the administration, Richard Rigby, who was paymaster and doing extremely well in his private fortune by the war, thundered that the bill ought not to modify habeas corpus, but suspend it altogether. But Fox's party, for it is now hardly too much so to designate its practical character, had scored a notable victory. The amendment was incorporated in the bill without a division. Fox still voted against the measure as dangerous and unnecessary, but rejoicing that the efforts of a faithful minority had confined its more mischievous powers. The bill in its amended form secured 112 votes;

the opposition could muster only 33, and the king found it "highly agreeable that they have made so poor a figure."

In April Charles spoke on an application made for relief of the king's debts, and while he made an acute analysis of irresponsible ministerial finance, his speech was "commended even by the courtiers . . . because it was remarkably decent and respectful to the King." Which, in view of the fact that his Majesty at the time owed his coal merchant six thousand pounds, may have been a compliment not quite untouched by an ironical sympathy. In the same month Charles spoke up boldly for a harmless fellow, an actor, who wanted a license for a playhouse in Birmingham, and had been much abused by a member who talked rather irrelevantly of Roman bread and circuses, and by another who said, on what grounds it is not clear, that the petitioner was an impudent creature. Fox would have none of this, called the previous speakers to account for their incivilities towards a profession to which he gratefully owed so much entertainment, and suggested that a little cultivated theater-going might help them to mend their manners. During the session he continued to bring forward the liberal view on every subject that came before the House. He wished the strangers' gallery to be opened in order that young citizens might early be acquainted with the conduct of state affairs; he supported a motion for increasing the incomes of the king's brothers, the Dukes of Cumberland and Gloucester, the latter of whom had been driven out of the country by fraternal persecution; he supported the Speaker when that gentleman, in acquainting the king of his own increased vote, took it upon himself to hope that what had been granted liberally would be applied wisely, thereby, as he insisted, communicating the sense of the House, but



CHARLES JAMES FOX
From the portrait by John Opie

greatly offending the royal sensibility; he "displayed astonishing parts on the revenue," in Walpole's phrase, when North introduced his new budget in May; and he roused his hearers to cries of "Bravo," and even to an unwonted clapping of hands, as he denounced the ministry for repudiating their obligations to Lord Pigot, governor of Madras, who was a few months later to die in confinement under the tyranny of a corrupt government. With this prelude to his part in Indian affairs, Fox's work for the session ended.

8

It was a session made memorable at its close by the reappearance of Chatham, who with health irretrievably broken at the age of seventy, came once more to plead for enlightenment and peace. Greatly aged since his last visit to the House, a mortal pallor on his face, his limbs swathed in flannels, and leaning on a crutch, he began to speak in a voice so feeble that he could be heard distinctly only by a few peers seated near him. As he proceeded, the old fire and eloquence returned. He was no advocate of colonial independence, but on grounds of both expediency and justice he pleaded with the government for a radical reform of its policy. Our chances of conquering America, where three million men were being organized in military discipline, grew less with each campaign. Our expeditionary troops were in daily and increasing danger of destruction, our finances were being strained to the point of ruin, and our breach with the colonies, already gravely critical, might at any moment prove to be irreparable. "You cannot conquer the Americans. You talk of your powerful forces to disperse their army—I might as well talk of driving them before me

with this crutch!" France had threatened war, but France, he surmised, would be content to let us waste ourselves in the destruction of our own colonies. "The Americans are rebels—but what are they rebels for? Surely not for defending their unquestionable rights." Unconditional submission had been the demand; it had been refused, and rightly, and it would be refused to the end, an end that we could no longer shape. It was a demand that ought never to have been made; there was now but one wise and just alternative—unconditional redress. Let the government forthwith repeal their aggressive acts, and he had hope that they might even yet recover their lost authority.

The speech suggests that Chatham had by this time lost touch with the realities of the situation, but it shows him to have been all clarity of vision as compared with the blind infatuation of the crown. It may have been too late to hope that his remedies would save America to the empire, but it was not too late to argue that they might yet redeem the national honor. But the ministers heeded Chatham as little as they heeded Fox, and defeated him by 99 votes to 28. The king was delighted by this contempt for a "highly unseasonable motion," and by finding that the "specious words and malevolence of that extraordinary brain" so little represented the views of his loyal subjects. Elsewhere another view was taken. Among Chatham's audience on this occasion was his son William, who two days before had celebrated his eighteenth birthday. "I cannot help expressing to you," he wrote to his mother, "how happy, beyond description, I feel that my father was able to exert, in their full vigour, the sentiments and eloquence which have always distinguished him. His . . . speech . . . was full of his usual force and vivacity." The proud son reported that his father's

demand for "the repeal of all the Acts of Parliament which form the system of chastisement" was "animated and striking beyond conception."

Parliament rose on June 6. "The King," says Walpole, "put an end to the session. The Speech was exceedingly humbled in tone, and talked of maintaining the right of Legislature, and of reestablishing Constitutional, not *unconditional,* obedience, which all subjects of a *free* state owe to the authority of law." Humbled in tone—thus much the constant effort and argument of seven months had achieved, but hardly more. The government had been persuaded to moderate their words; but their policy remained unchanged. They were, in fact, a little frightened by now, but they showed no greater wisdom in their counsels, nor firmer decision in the field. "England," said Frederick III of Prussia, "at this period had involved herself in a war with her Colonies, undertaken in a spirit of despotism, and conducted in that of folly." She continued to attempt a victory that would have been discreditable, and her ministers by their incapacity combined to make the attempt doubly inglorious. But Charles Fox and a few men like him were not to be dispirited, even in those dark hours.

CHAPTER VIII

Fox the Whig. The Decline of North

1777–1780

I

CHARLES WENT TO CHATSWORTH FOR HIS VACATION, AS the guest of William Cavendish, fifth Duke of Devonshire, and his young wife Georgiana, now twenty years of age, who was presently to play so picturesque a part in the great Liberal's career. On September 8, 1777, he wrote to Burke, "with respect to public affairs, it seems to be the opinion of everybody that one must wait for events, to form a plan of operations; now, my opinion is, that no event likely to happen can be anything to the purpose; but from the days of Demosthenes down to ours, it has ever been the resource of all indolent people to prefer the waiting of news to the taking of any decisive measure. . . . I have been living here some time, with very pleasant and very amiable people, but altogether as unfit to storm a citadel, as they would be proper for the defence of it." In the same letter, he announced his intention, as parliament was to meet late, of visiting friends in Ireland. Thither, two days later, he set out, and while there was much fêted and dined, formed the acquaintance of Henry Grattan, and caused a local sensation by bathing unharmed in the icy waters of the Devil's Punch Bowl at Killarney. During his absence he received a long letter from Burke, little suited to his own impetuosity, and yet remarkable as an exposition both of the Whig

attitude at the time and of Fox's contact with it. Its significance as a gloss on our later days will not pass unnoted.

The main argument is directed against the complaint of insufficient unity of purpose. The Tories, so it runs, have been able to create a popular mood against which reason and generous impulses are powerless. They "do universally think their power and consequence involved in the success of this American business. The clergy are astonishingly warm in it, and what the Tories are when embodied and united with their natural head, the Crown, and animated by their clergy, no man knows better than yourself . . . There is something so weighty and decisive in the events of war, something that so completely overpowers the imagination of the vulgar, that all counsels must, in a great degree, be subordinate to, and attendant on them . . . So that, on the whole, what with the temper of the people, the temper of our own friends [Burke is unconvincingly careful to speak as for their friends rather than for himself—he also has been an absentee from debates], and the domineering necessities of war, we must quietly give up all idea of any settled, preconcerted plan. . . . However, to act with any people with the best degree of comfort . . . we must . . . a little . . . assimilate to their character . . . They [the Rockingham Whigs] are, indeed, worthy of much concession and management; I am quite convinced that they are the honestest public men that ever appeared in this country, and I am sure that they are the wisest by far of those who appear in it at present."

Then, shrewdly glancing at his correspondent, "God knows whether this citadel is to be stormed by them or by anybody else . . . I know that, as they are, abstractedly speaking to blame, so there are those who cry out against them for it, not with a friendly complaint, as we do, but

with the bitterness of enemies . . . I am thoroughly resolved to give, both to myself and my friends, less vexation on these subjects than hitherto I have done; much less indeed. If *you* should grow too earnest, you will be still more inexcusable than I was; your having entered into affairs so much younger, ought to make them too familiar to you to be the cause of much agitation, and you have much more before you for your work. Do not be in haste. Lay your foundations deep in public opinion. . . . I have never given you the least hint of advice about joining yourself in a declared connexion with our party . . . yet, as I am clear that you are better able to serve them than any man I know, I wish that things should be kept so as to leave you mutually very open to one another . . . and wish this the rather, because (presuming that you are disposed to make a good use of power) you will certainly want some better support than merely that of the Crown. For I much doubt whether, with all your parts, you are the man formed for acquiring real interior favour in this Court or in any; I therefore wish you a firm ground in the country, and I do not know so firm or so sound a bottom to build on as our party."

The good sense of many of these sentiments, the ingenuity of all, the masterly gift for large and apt generalizations, and the tone of sincere personal affection that informs Burke's anxiety, are immediately apparent. How better could the operation of war upon public feeling be defined, how could the case for waiting and seeing be advanced more adroitly? And such parentheses as that on the "interior favour" of a court—how could the essential promise of Fox's character be more incisively told? And yet, in this most notable composition, there is a certain blindness that is more suggestive than all its insight.

The Whig character never found, perhaps, a finer

vindication than in the courage, the broad-mindedness, and the intellectual scope of Burke. Learned, witty, and brave, the great Irishman carried the old Whig tradition to its furthest limits of enlightened daring. With this tradition, now under Rockingham's presidency, Fox was shortly to ally himself. But merely a Whig, even by Burke's lofty interpretation of the term, he could never be, and that is what Burke failed to understand. Charles Fox was the first great English Liberal, and this implied qualities and ambitions of mind that in some essential respects went far beyond Whig conceptions. He came to be known as the Tribune of the People. He earned this title not by demagogic revolt against constitutional order, but by bringing a strict observance of that order passionately to the service of popular causes. He really did love the rights and ideals of the English people, and he spent his life in asserting and advancing them. There had been, and still were, Whigs dominated by personal or family interest, and by their agency the party had at times been as fertile a seed-ground for corruption as any other. But Burke was right in his claim for the Rockinghams. The Whig theory of public service as expounded by these men, and by Burke himself, was one of generous probity. But, even at its best, it was regulated by a kind of cold prudence, of which Burke's letter is a striking example. That this was a defect in the Whig temper we need not maintain, but it was a quality that distinguished it sharply from Fox's passionate Liberalism.

It is always difficult in the movement of history to assign the inception of an idea to a specific man or moment, but we need not be too cautious. It was Fox, more than any other man, who in English public life transfigured the Whig into the Liberal. How valuable this achievement was, remains a matter of opinion; but

the nature of the achievement is clear. To stake everything for a cause, to lose everything, to fight the House of Commons, the nation, the world, single-handed if needs be in vindication of a belief, to be unsubduable and unsilenced in defeat, and to be prepared in all extremities to accept the consequences of liberty "in widest commonalty spread"—we see Fox detaching himself from the great figures of the time, and going out alone to take up these advance positions in the field of political thought and action. There was, as always, an element of rashness in the intrepidity, and we can understand Burke's misgivings. But it was not the rashness only, it was the intrepidity itself that was beyond the scope even of the finest Whig idealism. To have so disciplined your mind in a faith that you could at all times obey your impulses and follow them confidently to the end, asking for no favor and fearing no cost, was Fox's personal enlargement of the Whig doctrine. It alarmed his friends, and it governed his life. When he exclaimed that if America must be defeated or abandoned, he would abandon it, there was not a Whig among them all but was startled by a logic that so outran discretion. It was a logic that was later to lead Charles inevitably to his support of the French Revolution. He realized, long before his time, that the freedom of any people must ultimately depend on the common freedom of civilization, and it was here that his understanding survived the test, when Burke's failed. He even went beyond this intuitive sense of liberal expediency. He worshiped the idea of freedom for its own sake; it seemed to him a lovely thing, and he would promote it in any place or season. That it was also the source of all other loveliness no one believed more devotedly than he, but it was in itself sufficient. Such a gospel in such an age, delivered

with so much fortitude and graced with so much pity, makes his much advertised follies seem strangely inconsiderable. We can see very clearly what Lauderdale meant, when he said that Charles was the best man he had ever known.

2

Parliament opened its autumn session in the middle of November. The government news was bad. American privateers were swarming round our coasts, an attempt to fire Portsmouth dockyards had nearly succeeded, Benjamin Franklin was in Paris captivating throngs of eager listeners who pressed to hear the famous savant who attended the salons dressed in snuff-colored broadcloth and with his gray hair unperiwigged. The court spirits had survived a somewhat serious reverse in the preceding December at Trenton, New Jersey, and in August the king, on hearing of a minor success, had so far forgotten his dignity as to caper into the queen's room crying, "I have beat them—beat all the Americans." But as Parliament opened, the air was thick with rumors of nobody knew what event. Ministers pretended confidence in a substantial victory, but never had pretense been more ill-timed. A few days later was to arrive news of Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga with six thousand men.

The royal speech again professed pacific intentions, and asked parliament to augment the forces in such measure as should be necessary to bring his Majesty's rebellious subjects to a sense of their own good. Walpole called it "the most pusillanimous speech" for which the crown party had yet been responsible, "timid, feeble, and disheartening." Fox concentrated his attack on Lord George Germain, declaring that ever since "that inauspicious Minister" had forced himself into administration,

our affairs had rapidly declined. It must be allowed that Charles would have been in a difficulty for an answer had he been asked when he had not claimed as much, but Germain, whose past record included conviction by a court martial for cowardice in the field, had certainly been an unhappy choice for the American secretaryship. Fox had no difficulty in showing that the war was steadily drifting away from any hope of a successful conclusion, and he maintained, moreover, that our conduct of it was now completely at the mercy of France, which might declare for the colonists at any moment, and make our withdrawal from America imperative. North rose in defense of his colleague and said that he was glad Fox had abandoned "an old hulk [North himself] to attack a man-of-war." Any satisfaction Germain may have derived from the compliment evaporated as he later overheard his chief remarking to Fox, "Charles, I am glad you did not fall on me to-day, for you was in full feather."

At the end of the month Charles wrote to Ossory that he could not help believing that, while the opposition made no ground in divisions, there was a steady veering of opinion, and that this must presently influence votes. On December 2, he moved for an "enquiry into the State of the Nation." North signified his assent, but, on being asked for specific papers, refused. Burke was reminded of the situation of Sancho Panza, who, seated before a well-furnished table, had suffered the mortification of seeing each dish removed on some specious pretense before he had touched it. At this point a whispered message came in that the Lords had granted the papers in question, and North for once lost his temper. Fox insisted that there could now be no objection to his demand, and that

a complete investigation of affairs be forthwith ordered. They knew that the situation was extremely grave, but unless they were informed as to the precise nature of the gravity it was impossible for the House to fulfil its duty by suggesting remedies. In any case, violence was clearly proving ineffective. For two years under Germain, he said, "the most violent, scalping, tomahawk measures have been pursued; bleeding has been his only prescription. If a people deprived of their ancient rights are grown tumultuous, bleed them! If their fever should rise into rebellion, bleed them, cries this state physician, more blood, more blood, still more blood! When Dr. Sangrado had persevered in a similar practice, . . . killing by the very means which he adopted as a cure, his man took the liberty to remonstrate . . . The Doctor answered, 'I believe we have, indeed, carried the matter a little too far, but you must know I have written a book upon the efficacy of this practice; therefore, though every patient should die of it, we must continue the bleeding for the credit of the book.' " And in passing he asked the noble lord (Germain) what he now thought of Mr. Washington, whom he had esteemed so lightly, in view of the tidings at that moment before them? A few hours before the debate opened, accounts of Burgoyne's disaster had reached London. Fox lost his motion by 178 votes to 89. The ministers, a little sobered now but unconverted, were fixed on keeping the country's misfortunes to themselves. At his levee the next morning, the king, in order to show how negligible the misfortunes really were, assumed so lively a mirth that North had to whisper to him that he was overdoing it. Later in the day, Fox pressed Germain for definite news of Burgoyne, and, on the secretary's expression of a pious hope that the defeated general

would not be condemned unheard, told his Lordship to look nearer home for the culprit, and was extremely disrespectful on the topic of a second trial. Burke and Wedderburn fell into a dispute that was like to have ended in a duel had not Charles and other friends intervened.

During the following days tension was at fever-heat in both Houses, Fox's private character being assailed by Thurlow, the attorney-general, Chatham accusing a fellow peer of having been a rake, to which the offended nobleman replied hotly that Chatham was still a dolt, to be corrected by another lordship who said that the oracle had only lost his memory: the opposition making motions that were supported by an unexpected vote or two from the government benches, and Wilkes making motions that were supported only by himself. As the storm subsided, North emerged from utopian consultations with the king, gloomily convinced, nevertheless, that at last something had to be done. On December 10 he informed the House that after the holidays he should lay before them "a plan for treating with the Americans," adding, in terms from which the old confident luster had gone, "I trust we still have force enough to bring forwards an accommodation." Charles protested that in this hour of national danger there ought to be no holidays. Chatham urged the same point in the Lords, when the young Earl of Suffolk, who was not too bright in his mind, indecently distinguished himself by telling the great old statesman that he naturally wished to be heard as much as possible in the House, as nobody would listen to him out of it. North decided that a holiday was very much to be desired, and parliament adjourned for six weeks. The king, in order to mark his disapproval of the situation in general, dismissed two quite inoffensive gentlemen of his household because they had Whig friends.

3

Parliament was called for January 20, 1778, but business was delayed by the absence of Lord George Germain, whose wife had died of measles during the recess. On an early date, Fox asked for Burgoyne's instructions to be laid before the House, with no more result than to throw a few Tories into a rage. Lord North, on being asked what the army's American quarters were like, replied sweetly that he would be a great deal more comfortable there than in the House of Commons. The Morning Post, "a new and most infamous newspaper," in Walpole's words, that had been founded in November, 1776, tried unsuccessfully to involve Charles in a duel with Colonel Luttrell, who had an unfortunate habit of becoming inarticulate when roused to great passion, as he frequently was by Fox. He had the good grace, when the newspaper accused his tormentor of cowardice in not issuing a challenge, to explain that he was no party to this transparent design. On February 2 Fox rose to make a speech that lasted two hours and forty minutes. He was to move "That no more of the Old Corps be sent out of the Kingdom." A great crowd assembled at the doors of the House, and was refused admittance, the Duchess of Devonshire being conspicuous among a large number of ladies so denied.

The speech, "framed with astonishing memory and method," condemned the war in the now familiar terms, and then in a masterly survey of its course, showed how grossly it had been mismanaged, "even on the principles of those who undertook it." Fox added nothing to the argument on this occasion, but he explored the full range of the opposition case in an effort that gath-

ered up many separate complaints into one sustained and coherent challenge. As he sat down there was a pause in expectation of the ministerial reply. Outside, a large crowd still waited, knowing that something momentous was going forward within. Nobody rose from the treasury bench. An amazed shuffle went through the House and beyond it as moment after moment passed and Fox's clear and, on this occasion, unimpassioned reasoning remained unanswered. North and his friends had realized that it was unanswerable. They decided to run no risk of making bad worse, and to rely upon their ample majority to pull them through the crisis. With an ungainly pretense that the indictment to which they had listened for nearly three hours was unworthy of notice, they called for a division. They got their majority, but to their consternation the minority vote was 165 against their own 259. The next day Charles wrote to Fitzpatrick, who was now in America, "We had several Tories with us, and I really think it was a great day for us. The Ministry . . . did not say one word, which scandalized even their own friends . . . The fact is, that it is such a cause as no man can defend well, and therefore nobody likes to attempt it." He added that while he believed that the opposition would continue to increase their influence by vote, he still had no hope of overthrowing the ministry.

On February 17 North produced his promised Plan for Conciliation. Walpole notes the date in his journal as "A day forever memorable as one of the most ignominious in the English annals." North's speech was an evasive but none the less humiliating confession of defeat. He proposed to introduce two bills, one abrogating all right to American taxation, the other providing for a settlement of the colonies by treaty with congress, which was to be considered as "a legal body" whose "acts and

concessions would bind all America." He was grotesquely pleased to say that even "a renunciation of independence would not be insisted on till the treaty had received final ratification by the King and parliament." As he spoke, the House preserved an unbroken and gloomy silence. It was suddenly clear that the whole American undertaking had been a dismal and disgraceful failure. What North still refused to recognize was that not only the war, but America, was lost. Fox, in announcing his support of North's proposals, warned him that they were likely to prove too late, and then confounded the minister by asking whether he was aware that ten days before a treaty had been signed between France and the United States. North was not aware of it. He had blindfolded the country for six weeks at Christmas, and had allowed the state to sink thus deeper into the morass. He was not even informed of this vital circumstance; Franklin had in fact signed a treaty of peace and commerce in Paris on February 6. And now nothing was left to the administration but an absurd affectation that all was still very well and hopeful. The king and his ministers had always desired peace, and now peace was in sight. Well might Walpole say of North that his impudence was his only honesty.

There is no doubt that North at this moment was sincere in his repeatedly expressed wishes to resign, and that he remained in office only at the king's urgent request. He was too weak a man to resist George's stubborn will, and at the same time his pliability made him far too valuable an implement for the king to sacrifice. To find another minister of a like unfailing good humor and docility would be impossible, and the king knew it. Moreover, there existed between the two men a real personal attachment, which lends a touch of human warmth to their long and discreditable connection. "What you mention of

my kindness is agreeable to me," the king had written in November, 1775, "and indeed honourable to you, as the affectionate regard I have for you arises from the very handsome conduct you have held when others shamefully deserted my service." Again, in March, 1776, "You will never find any occasion of providing for your children that I shall not be more happy if possible than yourself to provide for them. It has not been my fate in general to be well served; by you I have, and therefore cannot forget it." And yet again, in September, 1777, "You have at times dropped to me that you have been in debt ever since your first settling in life . . . I therefore must insist that you will now state to me whether 12 or £15000 will not set your affairs in order . . . nay, if £20000 is necessary I am resolved you shall have no other person concerned in freeing them but myself. . . . You know me very ill if you do not think that of all the letters I have ever wrote to you this one gives me the most pleasure, and I want no other return but you being convinced that I love you as well as a man of worth as I esteem you as a minister." And when Fox now, in March, 1778, taunted North again with his constant and never realized desire for resignation, he did not know that a few weeks before (January 31) the king had written, "I should have been greatly hurt at the inclination expressed by you to retire, had I not known that, however you may now and then be inclined to despond, that you have too much personal affection for me, and sense of honour, to allow such a thought to take any hold on your mind." And North, writing that he felt both his "mind and body grow every day more infirm and unable to struggle with the hardships of these arduous times," * stayed on.

* *Correspondence of King George the Third,* ed. by Sir John Fortescue, IV, 55.

The state of the ministry was desperate. The American-French treaty, which asserted the independence of the States as a principal object, was virtually a declaration of war between France and England. North's conciliatory bills—three of them eventually—conceived in panic, fell still-born upon the world. The Americans would discuss nothing so long as British forces remained in their dominions. The French treaty emboldened their attitude, as Fox had predicted. The only course that could have given North a chance of facing the world with credit was the recall of all troops. But this was beyond his comprehension. Fox rose from oratorical height to height in his insistence. He was tireless in repetition, determined that the issue should escape no one for lack of emphasis. Under this persuasion, the popular voice began to call for Chatham; for a French war who but he should be the man? The king was stung to a fury not quite unheroic: "No consideration in life shall make me stoop to Opposition. I am still ready to accept any of them that will come to the assistance of my present efficient Ministers; but whilst ten men in the kingdom will stand by me, I will not give myself into bondage. My dear Lord, I will rather risk my crown than do what I think personally disgraceful . . . it is impossible that the nation shall not stand by me; if they will not, they shall have another king."

4

The position of all parties at home and of the national fortunes abroad was now chaotic. North was perpetually on the point of resigning, and perpetually yielding to royal persuasion—he was to retain office for another four years against his own judgment, prosecuting a war In which he no longer found any sort of hope. Not allowed

to lay down a power which every day became a plainer mockery, he urged that at least it should be supported by coalition with some of the opposition leaders if terms could be devised. The king went so far, with much misgiving and, as he elaborately explained, purely in deference to North's anxiety, as to assent to the principle, provided always that North himself stayed at the treasury. But, whatever happened, George was still determined that he would not recognize American independence. Almost anything else he was prepared to do, but not that; which meant that he might as well have been prepared to do nothing. In this he was of a mind with at least one minority element, that led by Chatham, who continued to pronounce liberal sentiments that were nullified by this strange reservation. Protracted negotiations were carried on between the court and the various groups in opposition, groups that were themselves discordant. The increased minority of which Charles had been so proud was subject to violent fluctuations, and on one occasion when it fell again under fifty, he tore up a motion of censure that he was to propose, and walked out of the House in disgust. The court overtures were made to men who had no concerted intelligence as a party, and North was left unconsoled. During these fruitless approaches, on April 7, Chatham fell senseless on the floor of the House in an apoplectic seizure from which he did not recover. On the next day the king inquired of North, "May not the political exit of Lord Chatham incline you to remain at the head of my affairs?" So much, and no more. That Chatham was dying did not engage the royal attention, and when he did die, on May 11, and national honors were voted on the same day in the Commons without a dissentient voice, this curious monarch wrote, "I am rather surprised the House of Commons have unani-

mously voted an address for a public funeral and a monument in Westminster Abbey for Lord Chatham; but I trust it is worded as a testimony of gratitude for his rouzing the nation at the beginning of the last war, and his conduct whilst at that period he held the Seals of Secretary of State, or this compliment, if payed to his general conduct, is rather an offensive measure to me personally." Of the funeral, in June, the court took no notice. On Chatham's death, his followers turned to the leadership of the Earl of Shelburne, with whom Charles Fox's career was beginning to come into contact. For the time the cleavage in the opposition was represented by the divergent views and temperaments of Shelburne and Rockingham.

The political confusion found an aggravated reflection in the war, which was now entering upon a new phase. If the detail of the American struggle hitherto has been outside our scope, still more so is any attempt to elaborate a progress of which the historian * has said that "from henceforth virtually the area of the conflict became that of the globe itself." The commissioners who were sent out to America realized within a week of arrival the futility of their errand; they were treated with no more than an indulgent courtesy. The king fulminated against France, declared he would lead the army himself, usurped the functions of the war minister, and would not allow the fleet to sail from Portsmouth until it had undergone his personal inspection.† He worked

* J. M. Ludlow.

† The following brief notes from the king to Sandwich, hitherto unprinted, are preserved among the Hinchingbrooke papers. Related to the stress of the times, they have their charm.

Queen's House. April 22, 1778.
3 m. pt. 9 P.M.

Lord Sandwich. That everything may be properly arranged at Portsmouth, I have directed my clerk of the Kitchen, Charles Ramus, who is

incessantly, bravely, and without a gleam of understanding. To have entered upon the American war was a mistake that in the light of history it is difficult to excuse; but to have continued it after the spring of 1778, with no honor left in the cause and no prospect of success in the field, was an act of headlong imbecility. It was not until 1788 that by the records George III suffered from his second attack of madness—the first had been in 1765—but it is difficult to reconcile this falsetto display of egomania at any time with secure sanity. On far less evidence many men have been committed to miserable confinement, as dangerous lunatics.

5

The autumn session in parliament brought no relief to the ministry, though the king retained his touching faith in the virtue of a majority, which would no doubt furnish such men and money as two wars—and the prospect of a third, with Spain—required, and bring all to a happy conclusion. North was as obsequious as ever, but this time even he began to grow a little weary of the royal prattling in the face of inexorable facts. Opposition continued to expose a bankrupt policy with increasing violence, the weight of the attack falling more and more heavily on North himself. Shelburne in the Lords,

the bearer of this, to go to-morrow to that place, that he may see what articles are necessary to be carried there; I desire you will, therefore, give him a line of introduction to the Commissioner. I have told him to have nothing but plain roast and boiled, and no attempt of a dessert, for that would be carrying many more servants.

Portsmouth Dockyard. May 6, 1778.
21 m. past 8 P.M.

Lord Sandwich, I wish you would suggest what is best to be done to-morrow morning; if you have nothing particular, I will take the Queen out in the chaise just to see the face of the country, and in the evening I will row up the harbour to see the vessels in ordinary . . .

glancing at certain sinecures recently granted by the king to his minister, referred to emoluments that were formerly the rewards for service, and were now palliatives of disgrace. Fox took up the same note in the Commons, and "in one of the most severe philippics ever pronounced" dwelt on North's accumulation of places, heaped on him in proportion to his miscarriages," and reduced the first minister of the crown to tears and a pathetic explanation that his offices had all been "the voluntary offer of his Gracious Royal Master, and in consideration of his numerous family." As North was heir to one fortune and had married another, and as his numerous family consisted of five children, the appeal fell flat. Everyone understood the king's motives in showering obligations on a minister who had been so accommodating, and who was now so tiresomely bent on resignation.

Disturbing as was the candor of these reprimands, the court party had yet more serious warnings of its insecurity. The new year, 1779, which was blown in by a gale of phenomenal fury, opened with preparations for Admiral Keppel's court martial at Portsmouth. Of this celebrated trial, which was the outcome of an indecisive action between the British and French fleets off Brest in July, 1778, it is enough to say here that it was instigated by the Sandwich faction for personal reasons, that it became a party issue with the king openly supporting his admiralty chief, that the Rockingham Whigs bestirred themselves to an activity that surprised Fox into exclamations of delight, and that, in defiance of a prosecution that did not scruple even to manipulate log-books to its purpose, Keppel was honorably acquitted amid demonstrations of public joy, Sandwich being forced to take refuge in the Horse Guards

from an angry mob, and North hiding on the roof of his house until rescued by the soldiery.

Under this pressure, new proposals for coalition were made. Rockingham would not consider office with divided authority, a position which Fox urged him to abandon in a notable letter dated January 24, 1779. Referring to their past discussions on the matter, he continues:

What you considered as a step of the most dangerous tendency to the Whig party, I looked upon as a most favourable opportunity for restoring it to that power and influence which I wish it to have as earnestly as you can do. . . . [My opinion is] that power (whether over a people or a king) obtained by gentle means, by the goodwill of the person to be governed, and, above all, by degrees, rather than by a sudden exertion of strength, is in its nature more durable and firm than any advantage that can be obtained by contrary means. I do not say all this in hopes of convincing you, but only in my own justification for entertaining sentiments so opposite to those of the person in the world I most respect. In short, our difference of opinion is quite complete. You think you can best serve the country by continuing in a fruitless opposition; I think it impossible to serve it at all but by coming into power, and go even so far as to think it irreconcilable with the duty of a public man to refuse it, if offered to him in a manner consistent with his private honour, and so as to enable him to form fair hopes of doing essential service. . . . That I am not myself personally over-eager to accept office, I believe I could easily enough prove, if I were so inclined. But I do beg of you, my dear Lord, to consider how very impracticable it is either for me or for many other parts of the Opposition, to go on together upon the ideas upon which you maintain your refusal. For is it, or is it not, a fair and open declaration that you will never have anything to do with any Ministry that is *not entirely* of your own framing? . . . All I desire is that you will give me explicit answers to two questions; and this I think I have a right to, from the very open conduct I have always held towards you. The first . . . is, Whether you persist in the opinion you had of rejecting, if again proposed, the offer formerly

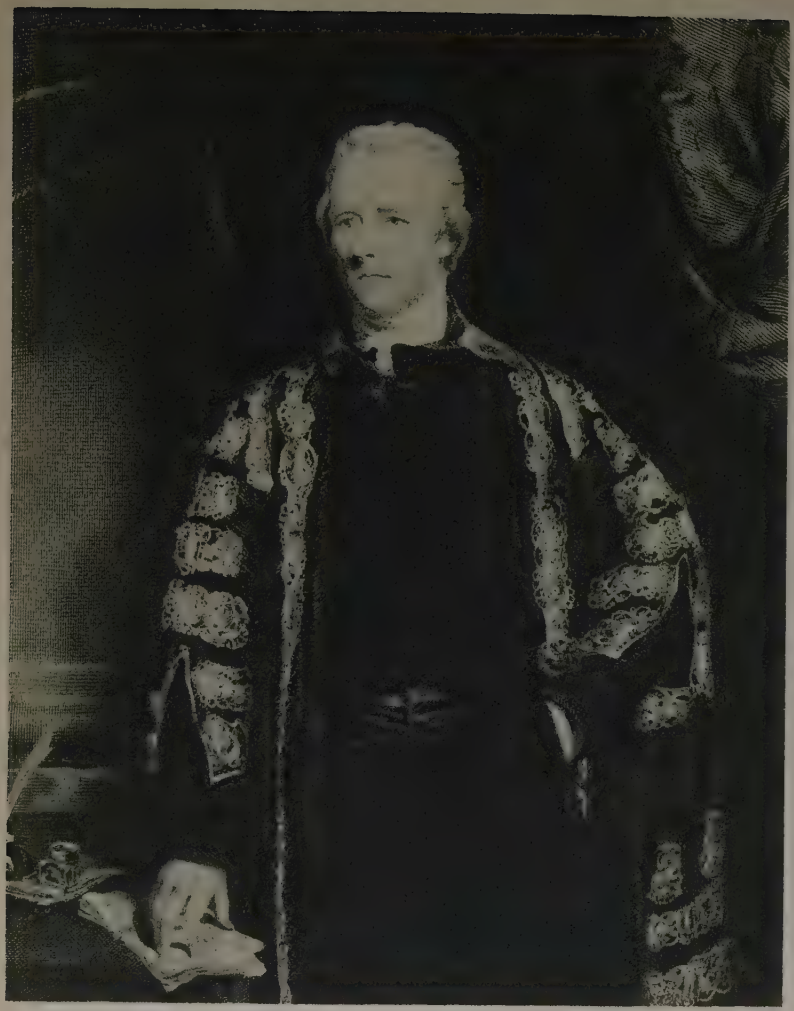
made? . . . If you should persist in rejecting all offers of this sort, my next question is, Supposing an Administration should be formed partly of those who now act in Opposition, and partly of the present people (always understanding the most exceptionable to be removed, particularly North, Sandwich, and Germain) whether you would give such a Ministry any countenance whatever? By *countenance,* I mean whether any of your friends would take employments with such a Ministry, if they were such as were suitable to them in other respects, and the men with whom they had to act, such as they could have no other objection to than that of coming in contrary to your opinion? . . . All I can say is, that I will give you my word of honour not to make any rash or improper use of any answer you may make me. If you decline answering it, I shall not complain, but it is necessary for me to ask. I think [your answers] very essential in regulating my future conduct. . . . I will trouble you no more upon this subject, but surely if there was ever a crisis where a country demanded all the efforts of its best men, it is the present, and surely some blame must lie at the doors of those who, from mistrust or suspicion, deprive it of the best assistance it can have. . . .

From this letter the cordiality of the writer's personal relations with Rockingham is clear, but the phrase "any of your friends," used as it is in a political sense, shows that Charles was writing to the leader of a party to which he did not yet look upon himself as pledged. Charles was answered at great length by the Duke of Richmond, in terms that emphasized this circumstance. The reasons given for Rockingham's refusal to accept court advances were persuasive; the ministry, it was more than suspected, were seeking Whig support merely to save their own tottering credit, and offered no undertakings either of present reform in American policy or of such future measures as would limit the arbitrary conduct of the crown.

If it was said that the opposition could secure a cabinet majority in the proposed redistribution of

places, then there could be no reason for not asking Rockingham to form his own ministry, with a reservation by treaty of seats for certain members of the old government. But in Richmond's view, which was here expressed as that of the Rockingham party, the king had not the least intention of taking any step that would weaken his own authority; he was consenting to these overtures merely to compose North's anxieties, and would see to it that the admission of no Whig to his counsels should interfere with his personal designs. In short, the Rockinghams were to be bribed into silence. The interpretation was a shrewd one, shrewd, perhaps, beyond the scope of Charles's enthusiasms at the time. In any case, that is what the Rockinghams felt about it, and as it happened theirs was an honor against which bribery was powerless. The king for his part was glad enough to have escaped again the danger of so odious a connection, and to see North convinced of the futility of all such approaches. Richmond, at the end of his letter, turned from his general survey of the situation to Charles's own position, using words of weighty significance:

> I have only one more subject to mention, and that is your stating that those who think differently from us as to entering into this negotiation may not think themselves justified in refusing to accept of office where they may hope to do some good, . . . that although they may wish for a *total* change as the *best thing,* they may not think themselves bound, when they see that impossible, to reject the second best, and leave things at the *worst.* If this reasoning applies to yourself, and circumstanced as things are, you feel inclined to take employment with the present people (after a few changes are made) I can only say that your conduct must be entirely guided by your own opinions, and I do assure you that I shall not impute your change to any improper desire for the emoluments of office. But as I certainly differ from you as to the wisdom of such a step, I cannot admit that it is real reason which



WILLIAM PITT
From the portrait by John Hoppner

governs you. I must therefore believe your opinions arise from a mistaken idea that they are right, which I think your want of patience in the present difficult situation, and the natural eagerness of your temper, leads you to believe. I can only offer you my opinions . . . from a real anxiety for your welfare, that such a step will be far from being for your interest. I am sure you will pardon the sincerity of so near a relation. You have many of those social virtues which command the love of friends. You have abilities in abundance; and your conduct of late years has done much to regain that public confidence which is so necessary to a public man. By a steady perseverance you may accomplish so essential an object. Once more pardon the effusion of a sincere heart. . . .

This communication, honorable alike to Charles and his kinsman, nevertheless harped on the "want of patience" and the "eagerness of temper" that had been the burden of Burke's complaint. There is, however, no reason to suppose that in this instance Charles was in any danger of being carried off his feet, or even beyond the depth of orthodox Whig prudence. That he seriously thought of taking office independently of the recognized opposition leaders is highly improbable, but he put his question bluntly in order to test the realities of the formal Whig mind. He sincerely thought Rockingham to be misguided, but he did not seriously think his own unsupported opinion to be of more value than that of men far older and more experienced than himself. Having applied his test, he dropped the subject, as he had promised, and he took no further steps to secure the offer that North was willing and even eager to make. The close of this correspondence, indeed, virtually marks Charles's entry into formal association with the Rockingham party. The spring debates of 1779 saw him the acknowledged leader of the opposition in the House of Commons.

In June of this year, the Countess of Ossory, writing that for herself she is sick of politics, adds that others would be too "if there were not a Charles Fox in the world to spirit them up." Writing to the king on May 29, 1779, Charles Jenkinson, then secretary for war, leader of the King's Friends, and afterwards Lord Liverpool, in a report of gossip that he has gathered about opposition designs, makes the astonishing statement that in the disposal of offices under any coalition, "Mr. Charles Fox must have a Place, but He would be content with one of Profit only without any Share of Business." * Mr. Jenkinson was a singularly ill-informed spy.

6

Early in March, Fox moved a vote of censure on the admiralty for neglect and duplicity. In a powerful speech, directed openly at Sandwich, he showed with his usual mastery of detail that the first lord had given the House false information as to the strength of the fleet before the action off Brest, that he was himself misinformed as to the strength of the enemy, and that he had culpably exposed Keppel to danger of destruction from which nothing could have saved him had the French taken their opportunity. Fox announced that if his motion were carried, he should proceed to another demanding Sandwich's removal from office, which in turn might be followed by impeachment. So convincing was his argument, and so vulnerable in fact was Sandwich's administration of the navy at that time, that as his indictment proceeded ministers became seriously apprehensive of defeat. North joined in the defense with unaccustomed vigor, and argued gravely that the motion was not against

* Fortescue, IV, 345.

a department but against the government as a whole. His appeal to the personal loyalty of his followers was timely, and saved the division by no wider a margin than 204 votes to 170. Highly encouraged by the event, Fox let it be known that he should bring his motion forward again in another form, which he did five days later. In the meantime Sandwich, not concealing his fears for his reputation and even his personal security, spared no effort to call up every possible vote, and on this occasion the government majority rose to 72. Fox's pertinacity was not to be denied, and six weeks later again he moved for the earl's removal; but by this time the court wires had been dexterously pulled, and Sandwich secured his verdict by a majority only three short of a hundred.

But the official vindication did not rob the attack of its effect. These admiralty speeches, together with others made by Fox during the same session on the general conduct of the war, induced a growing dissatisfaction in the public mind. "We have lost America. We have lost twenty-five thousand men. We have spent upwards of thirty millions by this accursed American war. Who has been the cause of its miscarriage? Is not that the question? Who led us into this war? Ministers. What were our motives for entering into and prosecuting it hitherto? The repeated assurances of ministers that the war was practicable; that the means for insuring success were adequate; that the issue would be correspondent." As week by week Charles assailed his opponents in words of such incisive challenge, reply became more and more constrained and shuffling, and ministers would sometimes leave the House uneasily contemplating a bare majority of twenty.

Even the king grew restive; on February 12 we find, "I am sorry Lord North takes so much to heart the di-

vision of this day: I am convinced this country will never regain a proper tone unless Ministers . . . will not mind being now and then in a minority." But on March 4: "Lord North cannot be surprised at my indignation at the number of persons who so shamefully avoided attending yesterday, which made the majority so much less than it ought to have been," and a list of defaulters is required. The king's letters to North from this date become increasingly peremptory, brushing aside the minister's repeated requests to be relieved from office with undisguised impatience, and rigorously applying the whip to a jaded and very unwilling horse. An occasional success in America, a fugitive spark in the steadily deepening gloom, was sufficient to support George's obstinacy, but it deceived no one else. Inspired by a new national spirit, the United States, even during the progress of the war, were opening up and settling vast new territories; volunteer associations in Ireland were sending in angry demands for the redresses of grievances to which nobody could pay a moment's attention; and in June Spain declared war against England. And on this last event the astonishing king could write, "The different papers from America show very clearly that, had not Spain now thrown off the mask, we should soon have found the colonies sue for pardon to the mother-country," and again, a few days later: "The enclosed papers confirm me in an opinion long entertained that America, unless this summer supported by a Bourbon fleet, must sue for peace. . . . I can never agree to healing over an uncured wound—it must be probed to the bottom . . . yet after that I would shew that the parent's heart is still affectionate to the penitent child." And, even more sublimely, before he would admit any man to office, he would "expect to see it signed under his hand that he is resolved

to keep the empire entire, and that no troops shall consequently be withdrawn from [America] nor independence ever allowed." A country that could survive such a ruler has not for nothing acquired a gallant reputation for blundering through.

Those voluble patriots to whom we owe the term Little Englanders have, as we have seen, always seen in Charles Fox an object peculiarly suited to their fussy indignations. Mr. C. L. Fletcher, for example, in his "Introductory History of England," writing of the French Revolutionary period, says: "As he had rejoiced over Saratoga and Yorktown, so Fox rejoiced at every British reverse and every French triumph until the Peace of Amiens." A very disloyal, ill-conditioned fellow in fact, with a settled grudge against his own country and an unnatural affection for anyone who should declare himself to be her enemy. This fevered view has no foundation in fact. Fox thought that the American war was a wicked undertaking, and he opposed it with an utter disregard of his own interests. He thought that the French Revolution, in spite of its horrible excesses, was necessary to the emanicipation of a people, and again he braved storms of obloquy rather than consent to a policy that should frustrate it. That in either course he was dishonoring his English name is a delusion that Bombastes must not expect us all to share. And for the rest, the events of this summer of 1779 are plainly significant. Inflexible in his denunciations of the American war, Fox nevertheless kept a clear reckoning between that undertaking and the conflict with France and Spain. He rightly held the one to have arisen from the other, and he charged the ministry with full responsibility for this dismal consequence of the original act of unscrupulous folly. But while he believed that the Americans were splendidly resisting a

tyrannous crown, he believed that France and Spain were basely using this country's embarrassments for their own interests, and he never for a moment confused our right to oppress our American colonists with our right to defy the threats of our opportunist neighbors. Any measure brought forward by the government for defense against these he supported with the full weight of his authority. When North in June introduced a bill for doubling the militia, Fox urged the minister to greater exertions than were proposed. He understood that five or six ships that could be sailed against the Bourbon fleets were nearly ready—let "every ship-carpenter, every labourer in the dock-yards, every man in the Kingdom, capable of holding an adze or driving a peg" be instantly employed in their completion. "God knows," he added, speaking of the militia, "that this is a moment of great public danger, and every means of every sort, which are in the least likely to enable us to resist our enemies, are proper to be adopted, and shall have my hearty support."

7

Charles spent his summer vacation among friends in England, and during part of the time found himself on the south coast when fears of an invasion were acute. On August 17, 1779, he wrote to Ossory from London that the French and Spanish fleets were certainly off the Lizard, between the Channel squadron and Plymouth. Sixty-three enemy ships had been sighted, the English had but thirty-six.

The enemy ships of the line were accompanied by a cloud of frigates, sloops, and fire-ships. The English fleet, commanded by Sir Charles Hardy, who had received no instructions to prevent this formidable junction, being

utterly unable to encounter so prodigious a force, was compelled to retire to the narrow part of the Channel, whilst the flags of France and Spain menaced and insulted the English coasts without molestation or control. Plymouth was, by the unaccountable negligence of the ministers, left so entirely destitute of the means of defense that the docks and shipping in the harbor might have been destroyed without difficulty. Fortunately this was not known to the confederate commanders.*

A few days later Charles was himself at Plymouth, believing that a battle was inevitable, and determined to find out the true position of things at first hand. On August 26, he wrote to Richard Fitzpatrick that the enemy seemed unaccountably to have withdrawn. "If I should think, from what I hear, that there is really any chance of their coming, you will easily imagine that I shall not leave this country so soon as I otherwise intended; but I think, if they do not appear very soon, the whole must be a mistake, or perhaps, after all, designedly false intelligence. I shall be in town on Friday or Saturday, unless there is a probability of more interesting sport here than partridge shooting." The next day he dined on board the *Sir John Ross* with John Jervis, then a captain, from whom he learned that an attack was unlikely; but writing again to Fitzpatrick, he displayed a temper that should be noted. "The fleet to-day was a most magnificent sight. It was formed in order that, in case of an attack, they may not be found in the confusion that Johnston was; and faith, when one looks at it and thinks there is a possibility of its coming to action in a day or two, *on se sent ému beaucoup*. If some things were otherwise at home, and the fleet were commanded by Keppel, one should feel very eager indeed; when, even in the present damned

* W. Belsham, *Memoirs of the Reign of George III*, 2nd ed., 1795.

state of things, who cannot help feeling something at the sight of it? . . . At all events, if the French should come again, I cannot think they will go away as they did before, and that there must, either at sea or land, be *quelque chose à voir;* in which case I should be very much vexed indeed, to have left this country just before the sight begins." On the next day he sent a further note: "There has been a strong south-west wind all day, but no news or even report at Plymouth."

Back in London Charles found a rumor current that the ministry was to resign, and a letter to Fitzpatrick indicates that he had some belief in it: "I really think there is now a possibility of saving the country, if these foolish people will give up the thing to those who know better. Between this and next campaign there is time for increasing the navy incredibly, or for, what would be much better, making a peace which we should dare to do, and these poor devils dare not." News of a success in America, however, enabled the king to rally his flagging team once more.

Parliament reopened at the end of November, and the king's speech from the throne achieved a startling distinction by containing not a single reference to the American war. Charles, in a long speech that made his anxiety for energetic measures against the continental powers and his contempt for the ministry equally clear, laid especial stress on this preposterous omission. Is the American war, he asked, "too trifling a subject to challenge any part of his Majesty's attention . . . ? or is it totally extinct and given to oblivion? . . . I desire the ministry to speak out, and say whether the American, like the Trojan war, is totally past, and no longer to be remembered in this House." In the course of the speech he severely censured Mr. William Adam, a Scotch member two years younger than himself, who had recently

been voting with the opposition and now announced his intention of going over to the ministerial side, his reasons being reduced by Charles to terms of ridicule: "Sir," he was represented as saying to North, "I cannot defend you on the ground of your own conduct, it is so replete with blunders, absurdities and inconsistencies, that all my abilities cannot even palliate them; but I will tell you what I can do to serve you: I will inform the world, that the men who oppose you are more ignorant, more inconsistent, more infamous, and more disgraceful than yourself."

The speech was delivered on November 25. On the 26th, Fox and Adam met in private discussion. On the 27th Adam wrote to Fox saying that after long reflection he was of opinion that his character could be cleared only by the insertion in the press of a statement that Fox meant no personal reflection by the offending passages of his speech. To this Charles replied: "I am very sorry to say that it is utterly inconsistent with my ideas of propriety, to authorise the putting anything into the newspapers relative to a speech which, in my opinion, required no explanation. You, who heard the speech, must know that it did convey no personal reflection upon you, unless you felt yourself in the predicament upon which I animadverted. The account of my speech in the newspapers is certainly unauthorised by me. . . . Neither the conversation which passed at Brooks's, nor this letter are of a secret nature, and if you have any wish to relate the one, or to show the other, you are at perfect liberty to do so."

Adam was unpacified, and on November 28, wrote saying that Charles's refusal to permit the publication of the proposed paragraph entitled him to demand "the only satisfaction that such an injury will admit of." On the following morning, a Monday, the two men met at

eight o'clock in Hyde Park, Adam accompanied by Major Humberston, a soldier who was to lose his life in India, and Charles by his devoted friend Fitzpatrick. A ground of fourteen paces was marked out, and on being asked by Adam to open, Fox replied, "Sir, I have no quarrel with you; do you fire," which Adam thereupon did.

Neither he nor the seconds perceived that his bullet had taken effect. Fox fired wide, and Adam was then asked if he was content. He inquired whether Fox would now declare that no personal affront had been intended. Fox, asserting that this was no place for apologies, desired his opponent to go on. Adam fired again, less surely this time. Fox discharged his remaining pistol in the air, and then observed that as the affair was ended he was at liberty to assure Mr. Adam of his honorable regard. Adam returned the compliment suitably, and it was not till then that Charles informed them that he had been wounded by the first shot. On opening his waistcoat they found that it was so, but not alarmingly. He took a week to recover, appearing in the House again on December 6, when the Annual Register recorded that the "incident seemed to have produced a renovation, rather than any detraction of his former spirit." The duelists, in the best tradition of romance, later became firm friends, and in Charles's dark days of the French Revolution Adam was one of the few associates of the North coalition period who did not desert him. It may be added that he lived to be eighty-eight, dying in 1839 after a distinguished career at the English court under the regency and as lord chief commissioner in Scotland, the "excellent old man" of Walter Scott's affection, "one of the most pleasant, kind-hearted, benevolent, and pleasing men I have ever known."

8

During the winter of 1779–80, the country simmered with protests against the growing corruption of parliament and the unwarrantable influence of the crown. Shire after shire sent in petitions calling on the Commons to vote no more supplies until reform was granted. An example set by York was followed by Hampshire, Middlesex, Cheshire, Devon, Huntingdon, Essex, Bedford, Dorset, Somerset, and even Welsh counties. In February, 1780, a great meeting in Westminster Hall, attended by Burke and Fox and their supporters, our old friend Wilkes, General Burgoyne of Saratoga, the leading opposition peers, and some three thousand members of the general public, warmly pressed the cause of the county petitions. Charles was placed in the chair, and for the first time showed the power that he could exercise over popular imagination. When at the close of the meeting it was proposed that he should be adopted as the future candidate for Westminster, the hall surged with applause. In the same month, Burke introduced his plan for economical reform, and in the following debates Fox in the now maturing prime of his eloquence drove hard upon a weakening government. On a subsidiary motion North escaped by a majority of only two. When the House at length divided on the first clause of Burke's plan, the opposition came within seven of victory in a House of over four hundred. This was on March 8; on the 13th the ministry suffered an actual reverse, failing by eight votes to save a government department from abolition.*

*The department in question was the board of trade, of which Edward Gibbon, who was brought to the House to vote suffering from an acute attack of gout, was a commissioner. The opposition success did not, in fact, take effect, being reversed on a later division.

The king, who a week before had in familiar terms assured North that he "could never suppose this country so far lost to all ideas of self-importance as to be willing to grant America independence," now declared that he could only attribute the strange behavior of the Commons to loss of reason. His Majesty was very shortly to have his suspicions alarmingly aggravated.

On April 6, Charles addressed the Westminster petitioners in their hall, again attacking the arbitrary methods of the king, and demanding annual parliaments. The court, expecting that the crowd would follow him to the House, ordered the Guards to be in readiness; Charles, however, took his seat without disturbance. But astonishment filled the treasury benches when John Dunning, a member of opposition, had the audacity to open the debate with a motion "That the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished." As the debate proceeded, ministerial astonishment gave way to consternation. The wording of the motion was as radical a challenge as could be devised against the whole court faction, and as midnight approached it was felt that Fox, leading the opposition, was at last about to bring his forces to a triumph about which there could be no equivocation.

The ministerial alarm was dramatically justified. The vote was taken, and Dunning's motion was carried by 233 votes against 215. North in subsequent debates was able to recover his majority, and Fox for a time feared that this memorable April 6 was hardly even a false dawn. But longer experience would have told him that these capital decisions are not made by Englishmen in a word. The day was, indeed, even more memorable than Charles's finely strung impetuosity could realize. The victory was no less decisive in that its full effect was not

immediately apparent. That majority of 18, on so direct an issue, was in fact a pledge that North's overthrow was in sight, and it was the first note in the swan song of arbitrary sovereignty in England. Had Charles not survived this date, his place in our political history would nevertheless have been assured.

CHAPTER IX

The End of the War. Fall of North Fox Secretary of State

1780–1782

I

THE BETS BOOK AT BROOKS'S HAS AN ENTRY DATED August, 1778, "Mr Fox betts Mr Hanger 10 gs. L[d] Sandwich is not 1st L[d] of the Admiralty one calendar month after the decision of the Court Martial upon Keppel. Mr Fox betts L[d] Northington 10 gs. D°." Charles lost his twenty guineas, but his name from this date seldom appears in this curious record. On February 24, 1779, "Mr. Fox betts L[d] Northington 50 to 10 that no man L[d] N. names and now in Opposition accepts a cabinet place before the 1st of Nov. next under L[d] North. If L[d] Guildford [North's father] dies before that time the bett to be off." During the following fifteen years he is concerned in not more than half a dozen entries, all but one or two which refer to public business. The fondest censor of morals could hardly take these club amenities into his reckoning, but now at the age of thirty Charles was in fact chastening also the wilder excesses of his youth to the calls of business. Once in April, 1780, Walpole notes indeed that he was at Newmarket at a moment when the opposition without him "had not the art and industry to raise a flame"; and that he now or at any time ceased to enjoy a good table, convivial society,

a sporting chance, or a day off among the blades, there is happily no evidence.

He was a keen sportsman—"too keen," says one chronicler,* "to be a successful one." His eagerness among the coveys was such that he not infrequently put the shot into his gun before the powder. On one occasion a keeper throwing his hat into a bush to flush a woodcock, the bird took its flight serenely to fresh fields, while Charles triumphantly blew the hat to pieces. Starting for a partridge beat at daybreak, he was seen by his host's family as they were seated at breakfast, returning with extremely uncertain gait. Asked if he was ill, he repied, "No, only a little tipsy." Being thirsty, he had asked a cottager for a bowl of milk, which the yeoman, wishing to do well by the quality, had laced over-liberally with rum. Another day the guns were driven home by a violent storm, and on their arrival at the house Charles was missing; he had found a farm laborer who had views on the scientific cultivation of turnips, and had taken a drenching rather than neglect the opportunity. Being at the Duke of Grafton's Fakenham pheasant-shooting, he noticed a young kinsman of his own, of whom nobody appeared to be taking any notice. "Well, young un," said Charles, by way of putting the shy youth at his ease, "where do you spring from?" The boy replied, "From Göttingen," where he had been at the University. "Not much shooting there, I suppose?" "Oh, yes, we used to shoot foxes." "Hush!" whispered Charles, "never pronounce that word again, at least in this house, for if the Duke were to hear that you had ever shot one of my namesakes, he would swear it belonged to Fakenham wood."

As the years went on he settled down into a regu-

* George Thomas, Earl of Albemarle, *Fifty Years of My Life*, 1876.

larity of habit, taking a liberal amount of exercise and enjoying any game that was forward. When he was fifty he rose at seven every morning, "mounted his horse instantly, rode to the river, and plunged into the Thames." He played cricket, eagerly but with no conspicuous success, running himself out with great regularity. Writing from his father's house at Kingsgate in 1771 to George Selwyn, he says, "My love to Carlisle, and tell him we have a cricket party here, at which I am very near the best player, so he may judge of the rest." When gout and dropsy cut him off from that enjoyment he took to trap-ball, which he played from a chair, and at which sundry small competitors accused him of cheating. Also he played tennis with enthusiasm. An onlooker venturing to ask how so corpulent a player was able to take such very heavily cut returns so successfully. Charles replied, "Because, sir, I am a very painstaking man."

Life, opening with more than a due allowance of extravagant follies, remained always an ample and varied delight to this "man born to be loved," in Burke's phrase. In the unlikely files of the funeral sermons preached on his death, we find this from the Rev. Charles Simmons's pulpit at Richmond: "Truth compels us to acknowledge that he had faults; but they were faults unallied to malignity or meanness; they were the genuine offspring of his warm and sanguine nature; and they flowed from the same fertile region, from which many of his virtues drew their source; they were faults which have been discovered in some of the most elevated and the most amiable of our imperfect kind; they were faults, in short, which, if we must deplore, we find it impossible to resent." It is well said, and it is clear that they were not resented by Charles's own contemporaries. He could be unsparing in debate, but while his earlier errors could

sometimes be turned into political capital by angry opponents, even the angriest was compelled to allow his private charm and amiability.

"His nature," says Brougham, "was generous, open, manly; above everything like dissimulation or duplicity; governed by the impulses of a great and benevolent soul." The Anti-Jacobins, Frere and Canning, acknowledged him as the wittiest speaker of his time, and it was an age of wits. His great strength was in debate rather than in opening. "Never in my life," says Rogers, "did I hear anything to equal Fox's *Speeches in reply*—they were wonderful." Porson observed that "Pitt (the younger) carefully considered his sentences before he uttered them; but Fox threw himself into the middle of his, and left it to God Almighty to get him out again." His voice in moments of vehemence became shrill, but in control "some of the undertones were peculiarly sweet; and there was even in the shrill and piercing tones which he uttered when at the more exalted pitch, a power that thrilled the heart of the hearer. His pronunciation of our language was singularly beautiful, and his use of it pure and chaste to severity." * He had a manner of extreme simplicity, was accessible to every approach, and responded with the unaffectedness of a child to any effort to interest or amuse him. In Brougham's words again, "A life of gambling, and intrigue, and faction, left the nature of Charles Fox as little tainted with selfishness or falsehood, and his heart as little hardened, as if he had lived and died in a farmhouse; or rather as if he had not outlived his childish years."

Fox now, at the time of the Dunning victory, had at

* Brougham. It should be noted that the reports of Fox's speeches were in almost every case uncorrected by the speaker.

least disciplined his habits to his responsibilities. His great and original powers were in full exercise, and he was not wasting them. Young as he was, he had already had twelve years of active parliamentary experience, and he was able to support his advanced views by an exact knowledge of procedure. At the age of thirty he was a thoroughly skilled parliamentarian. Rebel though he might be in his mind, he never made the mistake of supposing that constitutional reform in England could be achieved by unconstitutional means, unless, indeed, extreme necessity called for a Cromwell. He had no faith in the efficacy of guerrilla tactics or stump agitation. Very patiently, though without compromise, he submitted his splendid passion to the slow expedients of the House of Commons, speaking always for the truth as he saw it, but hoping always too that he would be able to make that truth prevail by the practical argument of a majority. His life was spent in that pilgrimage, and only once or twice was he allowed a glimpse of the promised land. Such a one now, in 1780, seemed about to break upon his anxious but intrepid vision. North's majority, if not lost, was critically insecure; the opposition was daily winning opinion in the country; and Charles himself not only was feared and respected in the House, but had also become a figure of high popular esteem. The average citizen was beginning very heartily to like this man who would be intimidated by nobody, and who was continually treating freedom as a living issue.

2

The summer of 1780 saw a fierce wave of Anti-Popery excitement sweep the country. Some two years previously certain penal measures against the Roman

Catholics had been repealed, and now Protestant bigotry succeeded in stirring up a demand for the suspension of this relief. England may always have had very good cause to be suspicious of popery, but reasonable Englishmen have always been able to distinguish between proper national safeguards and the senseless cruelties of heresy-hunting. In 1780, fanaticism indulged in one of its most disgraceful orgies, recalling the delirium of Titus Oates. A Protestant Association was formed, under the presidency of Lord George Gordon, then just under thirty years of age. This young man was possessed of a very special devil of intoleration. Dressing himself in Methodist garb, and wearing his lank hair festooned over his shoulders, Walpole's "lunatic apostle" ran to and fro in a perpetual frenzy of spiritual apprehension. Having succeeded in gaining admission to the king's closet, he harangued the astonished monarch for an hour, and left only on a solemn assurance that the king would instantly read a pamphlet crackling with hell-fire and Antichrist.

A zeal that at first excited no more than ridicule, suddenly assumed a serious aspect. Gordon gave notice that he was going to march on Westminster at the head of a host pledged to the vindication of the true faith. On May 29, a mob upon whose passions he had worked for months, assembled in Coachmakers Hall, Cheapside. Gordon told them that he would present their grievances to parliament on condition that he was accompanied by not less than twenty thousand people. June 2 was appointed for the demonstration, and on that day a vast crowd of "pious ragamuffins" met in St. George's Fields, Southwark. At Gordon's bidding they donned blue cockades to distinguish them in the event of trouble, and bearing blue banners decorated with the words "No Popery" they set off in three separate bodies for Westminster. As

members who were known to favor toleration appeared in the Yard, Gordon's invective produced an uproar that rapidly blazed into a scene of indiscriminate violence. Half a dozen peers narrowly escaped with their lives, the Archbishop of York "had his lawn sleeves torn off and flung in his face," the Bishop of Lincoln was pursued on to the leads of the House, Lord Boston was rescued as the rioters were about to cut the sign of the cross on his forehead, and when North urged Gordon to call off his ruffians, the demented saint cried out that with a word he could have the prime minister torn to pieces by the mob. At length the Guards were called out and the precincts of the Houses cleared, but the disorder had no more than begun. For eight days London was terrorized. That night two chapels belonging to Catholic legations were burnt; and on the following days private houses, churches, and public buildings were destroyed, no one was safe from assault in the streets, and a lawless and mostly drunken rabble paraded the town by day and night.

On the 7th, Newgate and the King's Bench were gutted, and the Bank attempted in force. The justices were powerless or afraid to act, and troops were summoned from various quarters, but although an imposing display of canvas appeared in St. James's and Hyde parks, it was not until the 9th that the disturbances were quelled and Gordon arrested. Nearly three hundred civilians were known to have been killed, and there were also large numbers of unrecorded fatalities; the hospitals were full of serious casualties; the property destroyed during the riots was valued at £180,000. Of the 135 prisoners who were brought up for trial, 49 were sentenced to death, and 29 executed. The legal proceedings were as precipitate and savage as the outrages themselves. Seventeen of

the persons executed were under eighteen years of age and three under fifteen, girls among them. Indeed, if the riots were disgraceful, the behavior of the authorities in dealing with them was hardly less so. During their progress, the government acted with as much indecision and panic as the intimidated justices. "There are no men in the country," wrote Burke in a letter dated "June 7, 1780, in what was London." The king shone in the crisis by setting an example of coolness and courage that was poorly followed by his ministers. And when the trouble was over, the conduct of trials under Wedderburn, who had recently been made lord chief justice and Baron Loughborough, rivaled the ferocities of Jeffreys. In defiance of equity, Gordon himself, tried for high treason, was acquitted. He survived, however, to receive a life sentence for criminal libel, and spent six years in Newgate, where he died at the age of forty-two, having added a finishing extravagance to his career by becoming a Jew.*

3

While the accounts of the riots do not mention Fox, their occasion was one in which he was closely concerned. The horror with which Burke and other friends of toleration viewed Gordon's insane exploit cannot but have been shared by him, but it could not prejudice his convictions. On June 20 he spoke for three hours against the

* John Wesley, at the age of seventy-seven, wrote in his journal for Saturday, December 16, 1780: "Having a second message from Lord George Gordon, earnestly desiring to see me, I wrote a line to Lord Stormont, who, on Monday, the 18th, sent me a warrant to see him. On Tuesday, the 19th, I spent an hour with him, at his apartment in the Tower. Our conversation turned upon Popery and religion. He seemed to be well acquainted with the Bible, and had abundance of other books, enough to furnish a study. I was agreeably surprised to find he did not complain of any person or thing; and cannot but hope, his confinement will take a right turn, and prove a lasting blessing to him."

proposed repeal of Catholic relief. Recognizing the dangers that might come from Rome, he was convinced that the present agitation did not arise from a calm opposition to these, but merely from the unnatural desire of bigots to fetter their fellow-creatures. "I am a friend to universal toleration . . . and I am against every thing that has the least tendency to bridle and restrain liberty of conscience." It is a notable fact that on this non-party occasion North voted with Fox and Burke, the former of whom paid a handsome tribute to his "true talents and natural disposition" when they were "relieved from the official trammels that controlled his mind," and effectively drew an instance from "Paradise Lost":

> As one who, long in populous city pent,
> Where houses thick and sewers annoy the air,
> Forth issuing on a summer's morn, to breathe
> Among the pleasant villages and farms
> Adjoined, from each thing met conceives delight—
> The smell of grain, or tedded grass, or kine,
> Or dairy, each rural sight, each rural sound.

The bill for repeal passed the Commons, but was thrown out in the Lords.

The administration, weak as it had been in dealing with the Gordon riots, nevertheless found itself unexpectedly strengthened by the outbreak. In a moment of public danger, men turned to the only authority there was, however incompetent it might be. North saw in the respite a suitable opportunity for fresh advances toward a coalition on favorable terms to the court, and conversations were again held. This time Rockingham, whose probity was a great deal more notable than his force of character, was less exacting than before in his demands, less exacting indeed than his support of the

recent petitions demanded. The proposals for general reform were dropped, the acceptance of certain individual bills being deemed sufficient to satisfy opposition honor. Rockingham stipulated for a seat in the cabinet without office for himself, and proposed that the Duke of Richmond and Fox should be secretaries of state, Thomas Townshend chancellor of the exchequer, Keppel head of the admiralty, and that important places should be found for the Duke of Portland, and Burke. Many Whigs were deeply offended by the omission of the names of Grafton and Shelburne from the list of recommendations.

The king showed at once that while he was willing for North to get what satisfaction he could from his negotiations, the royal pleasure was going to suffer no dictation when it came to a settlement. The Duke of Richmond, it seemed, had for long been extremely disrespectful to his Majesty, and his name could not be considered until he made ample apologies. The Duke of Portland he would accept with pleasure, and "Messrs. Townshend and Burke would be real acquisitions." Keppel might be given a command at sea, but could not be placed at the admiralty. Charles was too young for a secretaryship of state, but in words of striking self-revelation the king withheld his absolute veto: "As to Mr. Fox, if any lucrative, not ministerial office, can be pointed out for him, provided he will support the Ministry, I shall have no objection to the proposition. He never had any principle, and can therefore act as his interest may guide him." Rockingham had asked but little; he was now offered less, and North was once more frustrated by his master's perversity. The ministry began rapidly to lose the ground that it had regained, and it decided to go to the country.

The election was held in September. Keppel stood for Windsor, the king hotly exerting his personal influence against him, and the Prince of Wales, now eighteen years old, openly working for the admiral. Keppel was defeated, but was thereupon invited to contest the Surrey county seat, which he won. The Windsor citizens paraded the royal terrace wearing crêpe favors with Keppel's name, and the Prince of Wales declared that the Surrey election was the happiest event he had ever known. After a sharp contest, Charles carried Westminster with Admiral Rodney against the government candidate, and was chaired round the town in triumph. The poll was declared on September 22; on the 15th, Charles wrote to Burke that the figures to date were: Rodney, 4,476; Fox, 4,059; Lord Lincoln, 3,315. Rodney, at the age of sixty, had distinguished himself in the previous January against the Spanish fleet off Cape St. Vincent. It is charmingly told of him that, being detained in Paris by heavy financial difficulties, he was released by the generosity of the Marshal de Biron, who lent him a thousand louis, saying that his country's chivalry could not take so poor an advantage of a distinguished enemy.

The new parliament met on October 31, 1780. The election had had no important effect on the state of the parties, but there were notable changes in the House. Burke had been turned out by the Bristol constituency that he had represented for the last six years. He took the defeat philosophically, saying that it would teach the Whigs the necessity for greater vigor in their ways. He returned to parliament the following year as member for Malton in Yorkshire. Burgoyne, that strange figure whose Saratoga debacle ranks among Creasy's fifteen decisive battles of the world, whose quarrel with Lord George Germain had resulted in the previous year in

his dismissal from the service for refusing to return to America, whose cause was one of Charles's enthusiasms, and who was to taste some popular success as a dramatist, lost the pocket borough of Preston, which he had held since 1768, and was to recover in 1784. "There is an ugly report," says Fox in his letter to Burke, "that Burgoyne is beat at Preston. It is merely report, but I do not like it." Among the new members were Richard Brinsley Sheridan, aged twenty-nine, for Stafford; William Wilberforce, aged twenty-one, for Hull; and William Pitt, of the same age, for Appleby.

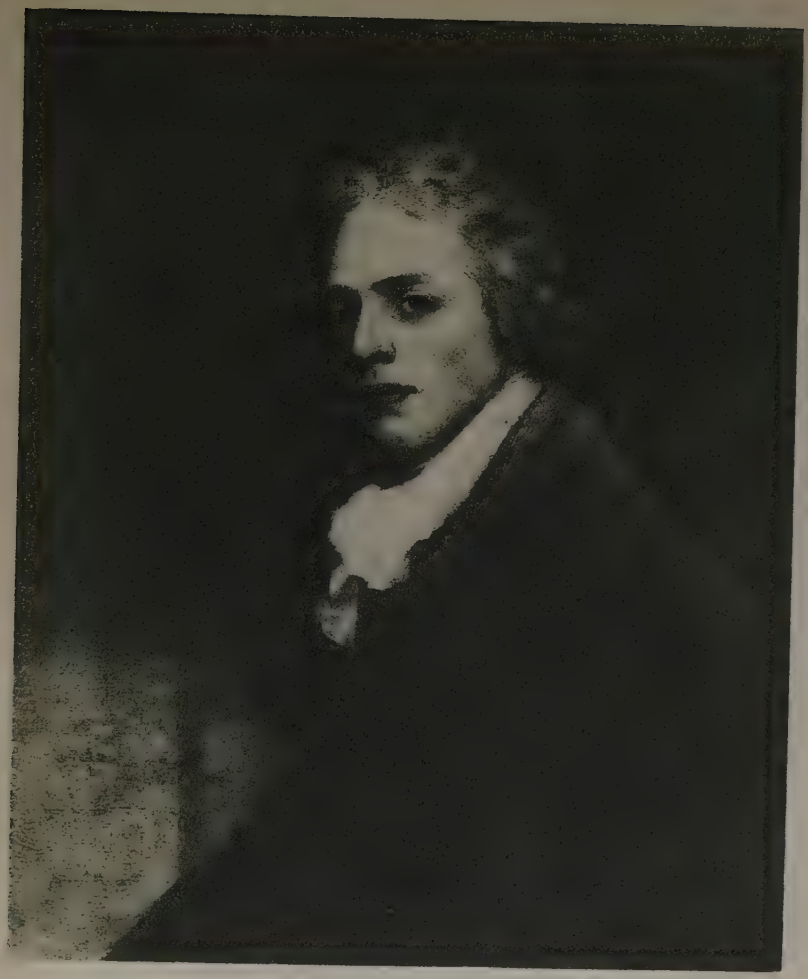
4

The session opened to the old tune. Peace with France had been mentioned. "I shall only add one reflection," wrote the king to North on the day that parliament met, "that, whilst the House of Bourbon make American independency an article of their propositions, no event can ever make me be a sharer in such negociation." The speech from the throne emerged from a general haze only to announce the necessity of preparing for at least another year of war. Speaking on the address, Fox again urged the abandonment of the American war, and concentration on that with France. That in spite of all reason, morality, and expediency, the one should still be continued was to him inconceivable, but as for the other, he would with regard to the Bourbons remind his hearers of the saying, "Let us not rail at Alexander, let us beat him."

So pleased were his Westminster constituents with his performance on this occasion, that they presented him with an address of congratulation and thanks, and with a somewhat unnecessary solicitude pledged themselves to take especial precautions for the safety of his person.

The first division in the new House showed that the court still had a compact majority for the common run of business. But the difficulties that were crowding upon the government were such that a packed lobby could not indefinitely save them. By the end of 1780 the state of India was highly threatening, and Holland had been added to the list of countries at war with England.

In February, 1781, Fox objecting to a government appointment that was in fact indefensible, the king again opened his mind to North: "The question proposed by Mr. Fox . . . was unjust and indecent, as everything that comes from that quarter must naturally be expected." In the same month a dramatic scene took place in the House during the debate on the later clauses of Burke's economy bill. As one of the members opposing the measure resumed his seat, there were cries of "Mr. Pitt! Mr. Pitt!" and in a chamber that for the time seemed to be haunted by the presence of the Great Commoner, his son rose to speak for the first time. He spoke for the bill, and the impression he made upon a crowded House was instantaneous. Chatham's instruction had not been wasted. "His voice," we read, "was alike silvery and sonorous," though Rogers once observed that it sounded as though he had worsted in his mouth. "No superfluous imagery, no attempt at brilliancy of effect . . . marked this first and famous display of the oratorical power of the Younger Pitt. His manner was calm, modest, dignified, and perfectly self-possessed." North said dispassionately that it was the best first speech that he had ever heard. "He is not merely a chip of the old block," said Burke, "but the old block itself." As the young member finished speaking, Fox was at his side with generous congratulations. But if he was already an assured speaker, Pitt was as yet no prophet. An old member overhearing Charles's



RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN
From the portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds

compliments, remarked, "You may well praise the speech, sir, for except yourself there is no man in the House who could make such another; and, old as I am, I hope to hear you both battling it within these walls as I have heard your fathers before you." Fox had no answer, but Pitt, glowing with the kindness shown him by the Whig leader, replied, with more grace than foresight, "I have no doubt, General, you would like to attain the age of Methuselah." In this debate, Sheridan, who had spoken once previously but without success, also first made his mark, telling a court wag that his wit had the distinction of being most evident when he was attempting to be serious.

During the following months of the session, Fox spoke constantly and with a mastery that grew from power to power. His examination of North's finance displayed at once a control of detail and a grasp of general principles that showed how deep were the foundations of his brilliant advocacy. In a debate upon the county petitions he "shone transcendently," and covered the whole range of the court's mismanagement in a speech that kept the House at close attention for over two hours. In another speech of equal length he resumed the attack on American policy, confident in the face of adverse votes that, if he did not fail in determination, the arbitrary fanaticism of his opponents must sooner or later collapse. Twice his attention was again engaged by William Pitt. On one occasion, the two men rose together to follow North, and Fox immediately gave way. On the other, when Fox moved for "A Committee to take into Consideration the State of the American War," the younger man supported him in a speech that induced Fox to say the new member was already one of the first men in parliament.

5

If Charles was at this time attending very closely to business, and curbing such excesses as might impair his capacities, he had involved his fortune in a disorder from which he was only to recover years later by the action of friends, and for some time yet he was spasmodically tempted by the tables in the hope of relieving the pressure of creditors. A couple of younger sparks having the temerity to set up a bank at Brooks's, Charles and Fitzpatrick broke it for them to the tune of four thousand pounds. "There," said Fox, according to Walpole, who tells the tale, "so should all usurpers be served." And Walpole adds, "He did still better; for he sent for his tradesmen, and paid as far as the money would go. In the mornings he continues his war on Lord North, but cannot break *that* bank."

But the success did not avail him, for three weeks later Walpole writes, "As I came up St James's Street, I saw a cart and porters at Charles's door; coffers and old chests of drawers loading. In short, his success at faro has awakened his host of creditors; but unless his bank had swelled to the size of the Bank of England, it could not have yielded a sop apiece for each. Epsom, too, had been unpropitious; and one creditor has actually seized and carried off his goods, which did not seem worth removing. As I returned full of this scene, whom should I find sauntering by my own door but Charles? He came up and talked to me at the coach-window, on the Marriage Bill, with as much *sang-froid* as if he knew nothing of what had happened." And on June 20, "Sold by auction the library of Charles Fox, which had been taken in execution." Among the books was a presentation

copy of the first volume of "The Decline and Fall," containing a note on the flyleaf in Charles's hand: "The author at Brooks's said there was no salvation for the country until six heads of the principal persons in administration were laid upon the table. Eleven days after, the same gentleman accepted a place of lord of trade, under those very ministers, and has acted with them ever since." Such, we are told, was the eagerness of the bidders for the smallest souvenir of the People's Tribune, that the volume containing this note fetched no less a sum than three guineas. It may be hoped that Gibbon, who was as susceptible as most authors, saw no account of the transaction; though the bibliophile may be excused for envying the lucky purchaser at the price. The pulse even of a Thomas J. Wise might quicken as such things are told.

A further note of the time may be taken from Walpole: "Lateness of hours is the principal feature of the times. . . . Gaming is yet general, though money, the principal ingredient, does not abound. My old favourite game, 'faro,' is recently revived. I have played but twice, and not all night, as I used to do. It is not decent to end where one began, nor to sit up all night with a generation by two descents my juniors. Mr. Fox is the first figure in all the places I have mentioned, the hero in Parliament, at the gaming table, at Newmarket. Last week he spent twenty-four hours at all three, or on the road from one to the other, and ill the whole time, for he has a bad constitution, and treats it as if he had been dipped in the immortal river; but I doubt at last his heel will be vulnerable." Walpole in his later years—he was now well over sixty—was a fellow of caprice, and not always logical in his processes. He allowed himself some indignation about Charles that did not square with his

own confessions—"and not all night as I used to do," and again, "I doted on faro above thirty years ago, but it is not decent to sit up all night now with boys and girls," observations hardly conformable with, "The more marvellous Fox's parts are, the more one is provoked by his follies, which comfort so many rascals and blockheads, and make all that is admirable and amiable in him only matter of regret to those who like him as I do." As to the reflection on Charles's powers of resistance, Walpole might plead that after all he died at the age of fifty-seven; but the third Lord Holland, who knew more about it than Walpole, in annotating the above passage, remarks: "Why he says his constitution was a bad one I cannot divine; I should say nearly the strongest I ever knew."

6

Before the close of the 1780–81 session, Fox returned to his condemnation of the existing marriage laws. England, which in modern history has been, if so loud a claim may be forgiven, the example of the world in its legislative practice, has been, nevertheless, so curiously insensitive in this fundamental concern of human happiness, that it is but just to quote the essential argument of one of the first men to approach the theme with liberal judgment.

> In that generous season [said this man whose convictions are sometimes impugned] which this marriage act labours and intends to blast, a young man, a farmer, or an artisan, becomes enamoured of a female, possessing, like himself, all the honest and warm affections of the heart. They have youth, they have virtue, they have tenderness, they have love, but they have not fortune. Prudence, with her cold train of associates, points out a variety of obstacles to their union, but passion surmounts them all, and the couple are wedded. What

are the consequences? happy to themselves, and favourable to their country. Their love is the sweetener of domestic life. Their prospect of a rising family becomes the incentive to industry. Their natural cares and their toils are softened by the natural ecstasy of affording protection and nourishment to their children. The husband feels the incitement in so powerful a degree, that he sees and knows the benefit of his application. Every hour that he works brings new accommodation to his young family. By labouring this day, he supplies one want, by labouring another, he imparts one conveniency or one comfort; and thus, from day to day, he is roused into activity by the most endearing of all human motives. The wife again, instigated by the same desires, makes his house comfortable, and his hours of repose happy. . . . Thus, while they secure to themselves the most sober and tranquil felicity, they become, by their marriage, amiable, active, and virtuous members of society.—View the same couple in another light. Bound together in heart by the most ardent desires, and incited by their passion to marry without having any great prospect before them, their parents intervene; they are not arrived at the age of twenty-one; under the authority of the marriage act, their parents prevent their marriage. . . . But they have it not in their power to prevent their intercourse. . . . What are the consequences? Enjoyment satiates the man, and ruins the woman; she becomes pregnant; he, prosecuted by the parish for the maintenance of the child, is initiated in a course of unsettled pursuits and of licentious gratification. Having no incitement to industry, he loses the disposition, and he either flies the place of his residence, to avoid the expense of the child, or he remains the corrupter and disgrace of his neighbourhood. The unhappy female, after suffering all the contemptuous reproach of relations and all the exulting censure of female acquaintances, is turned out of doors, and doomed to struggle with all the ills and difficulties of a strange and severe world. The miserable wanderer comes to London, and here, after waiting, perhaps, in vain to secure some hospitable service, in which she might be able to retrieve or conceal her misfortune, she is forced, much oftener by necessity than inclination, to join that unfortunate description of women, who seek a precarious subsistence in the gratification of loose desire. Good God! what are the miseries that she is not to undergo—what are the evils that do not result to society! but above all, what must be the

consolation of that legislature who, from pride and avarice are mean enough to inflict such misfortunes on their country!

It is like a scene from Crabbe. Fox went on to attack with particular severity the clause of the Marriage Act that enabled parents to nullify marriages contracted by their children under the specified age without consent, and to bastardize the offspring of such unions. He carried his bill for repeal in the Commons, but it was rejected by the Lords.

7

Parliament rose on July 18, and met again at the end of November. In the interval an event of capital importance had taken place in America, and the news of it had reached England. On October 19, 1781, Lord Cornwallis surrendered, with all that was left of his army, to Washington at Yorktown. North, in unwonted agitation, exclaimed on hearing the tidings, "O God! it is all over." But the speech from the throne showed that the king thought otherwise. He had labored earnestly to restore to his "deluded subjects in America that happy and prosperous condition" and so forth, but "the late misfortune in that quarter" called for "the firm concurrence and assistance" of parliament, "to frustrate the designs of our enemies, equally prejudicial to the real interests of America and to those of Great Britain." Fox threw off all disguise but the thinnest veil of irony. It was time for somebody to speak his mind about the king, and he spoke it. "If men were unacquainted with the nature of our constitution, and did not know that the speech was contrived by a cabinet council, what would they pronounce the present speech from the throne to be . . . but the speech of some arbitrary, despotic, hard-hearted . . . monarch, who, having involved the slaves,

his subjects, in a ruinous and unnatural war, to glut his enmity, or satiate his revenge, was determined to persevere, in spite of calamity . . . ; that it was the speech of a monarch incapable of feeling his own misfortunes, or of sympathising with the sorrows of his people, when the high prerogative of his despotic will was disputed; for despotic monarchs were the most tenacious of their rights, as they called them, and allowed nothing for the feelings or the comforts of their fellow-creatures." It was, he continued, the general belief that they would have heard a confession from the throne that his Majesty had been misled, that the deception was now at an end, and that it was now for parliament to take immediate steps to restore peace. "Instead of this, we have heard a speech breathing vengeance, blood, misery, and rancour. It speaks thus—'Much has been lost; much blood, much treasure has been squandered; the burthens of my people are almost intolerable; but my passions are yet ungratified, my object of subjugation and revenge is yet unfulfilled, and therefore I am determined to persevere.' "

We may allow, and even admire, the courage of the king's misguided pertinacity, but there can be no doubt that Fox sincerely believed his language on this occasion to be as just as it was bold. Turning from the king to the ministers, he declared openly that they were a curse to the country. The following day, Pitt again spoke with the opposition, and denounced the American war in terms that Fox himself could not have exceeded. A little later, Charles asserted of the boy who was so soon to be his most formidable rival, that he could no longer lament the loss of Chatham, since all his virtues and talents were living in his son. It is amusing to note that earlier in the year, Pitt had been elected to Brooks's on Fox's nomination, and that although the famous club was within a

year or two to become an extremely unsympathetic place to the younger statesman, he continued to pay his subscription till the end of his life. Sheridan, who also was elected (on Fitzpatrick's nomination) during his first parliamentary session, was, on the other hand, to find in St. James's Street a spiritual home entirely to his taste.

For a time North's majority held, but after the Christmas recess it fell into a sudden, and this time irreparable, decline. No news comfortable to the ministry arrived, and a now thoroughly discredited cause was left with no effective support but the king's endless resolution. Fox's unabated onsets had told their tale, and North's apparently secure position was at length on the verge of collapse. On January 24, 1782, Charles, returning to his attack on Sandwich, moved that "it be referred to a committee to enquire into the causes of the want of success of his Majesty's naval forces during the war, and more particularly in the year 1781." North accepted the motion, and on February 7, the opposition, led by Fox, and supported among others by Pitt and Sheridan, moved that "there has been gross mismanagement of his Majesty's naval affairs in the year 1781." The motion was lost, but by no more than twenty-two votes. Although the whole House was in committee, Fox gave notice that he should present the same motion to the House in open session, in order that it should be recorded in the Journals. On the 20th he did this, and the government majority was reduced to nineteen. On the 22nd a motion was introduced for putting an end to the American war, and in the division that followed a debate lasting till two in the morning, the voting was 194 for the government, and 193 against. Less than a week later, the ministers, derelict with a majority of one, proposed to adjourn the House for a fortnight's consideration of the case, and

were defeated by a majority of nineteen, Pitt urging the House, "by every consideration of duty and prudence, to withdraw confidence from the present administration." News arrived that Minorca had been surrendered to the French. On March 5, the government itself was, as Fox said, "beaten" into bringing forward a bill "to enable his Majesty to conclude a peace, or truce, with the revolted colonies of North America." On the 8th, the opposition moved a vote of censure on the ministers, who saved themselves by ten votes. On the 15th, the motion was repeated, and the majority fell to nine. Jenkinson, the king's chief Friend, employed a ferrety fellow named John Robinson to keep an exact scrutiny of the voting day by day, and this gentleman was grieved to report that on the 15th "The Rats were very bad." *

Fox pressed the falling ministry without pause, and gave notice to challenge again on the 20th. On March 9, the king had written to North, "I am much hurt at the appearance of yesterday in the House of Commons, and at [your] opinion that it is impossible for the present Ministry to continue to conduct public business any longer." On the 17th, we find, "I am resolved not to throw myself into the hands of Opposition at all events, and shall certainly, if things go as they seem to lead, know what my conscience as well as my honour dictates as the only way left for me," and on the 19th, North having pleaded for relief from an intolerable situation, "After having yesterday in the most solemn manner assured you that my sentiments of honour will not permit me to send for any of the leaders of the Opposition and personally treat with them, I could not but be hurt at your letter of last night. Every man must be sole judge of his feelings: therefore whatever you or any man can say on that

* Fortescue, V, 389.

subject has no avail with me. . . . If you resign before I have decided what I will do, you will certainly for ever forfeit my regard." There is a stirring note in this desperate resistance, which the king in his present mood was prepared to take to the point of abdication. The royal yacht was in constant readiness for a fortnight. But the mood passed, and Rockingham was approached through the agency of Thurlow, the lord chancellor. The Whig leader was asked to accept office and leave the discussion of terms until he had been called. The stratagem did not succeed, and Rockingham accepted only on condition of entire freedom. When the House met on the 20th, North, having after some disturbance obtained leave to speak before the debate opened on the renewed vote of censure, was able to announce that with the royal sanction the administration was at an end. North went out with a jest. It was snowing; a long debate had been expected, and North's was almost the only carriage in attendance. "You see, gentlemen," he remarked as the House was leaving, "the advantage of being in the secret." At an end also was the American war, though peace was not formally concluded until November. On March 27, the king wrote to the minister with whom he had shared so stoutly so many ignoble vicissitudes, "At last the fatal day has come which the misfortunes of the times and the sudden change of sentiments of the House of Commons have drove me to of changing the Ministry, and a more general removal of persons than I believe was ever known before. I have to the last fought for individuals, but the number I have saved, except my Bedchamber, is incredibly few. . . . The effusion of my sorrows has made me say more than I had intended, but I ever did and ever shall look on you as a friend, as well as a faithful servant."

8

In the new cabinet, Rockingham was first lord of the treasury, Shelburne and Fox the principal secretaries of state, and the Duke of Grafton lord privy seal. Among the other members, Thurlow, who had for long been inclined to opposition policy, was retained from the old ministry. Fitzpatrick, and more especially Sheridan, received ample recognition of their claims in junior posts, but as much cannot be said of Burke, who was appointed paymaster general of the forces, with no place in the cabinet. But many of the Whigs suspected him of sentiments that might not be too offended by judicious court flattery. Pitt was approached in handsome terms in connection with one of the smaller offices, but that remarkable young gentleman of twenty-three had a few weeks before, in the Sandwich debates, informed the House, "For myself, I could not expect to form part of a new administration, but were my doing so more within my reach, I feel myself bound to declare that I never would accept a subordinate situation."

At the age of thirty-three, Charles had reached one of the great offices of state, by merit and no favor. He was indeed the most effective force and the most engaging personality in the new government. He wanted power, because he believed that he could employ it wisely for the country, and he had achieved it. His tenure was to be short and stormy, and complicated from the first by deep-rooted differences with Shelburne. Before examining these, we must for a little time turn our attention elsewhere. The fall of North's ministry was not at this moment the only distress that was assailing the mind of George III.

CHAPTER X

The Prince of Wales, Fox, and Shelburne Coalition with North

1782–1783

I

WE HAVE SEEN WHAT THE KING THOUGHT OF FOX. What Fox thought of the king is indicated in a letter written to Fitzpatrick in September, 1781. "I agree with you in thinking that the people of this country in general deserve no pity, and certainly the king still less. . . . Indeed, indeed, it is intolerable to think that it should be in the power of one blockhead to do so much business." Each was genuinely convinced that the other was a menace to the country, and neither was given to the arts of evasion when he felt deeply. But, in the king's attitude at least, there was another and more personal source of mistrust. Whatever may be said for or against George Frederick, Prince of Wales, there is no doubt that he was an exceedingly unsatisfactory son, and there is none that his studied misconduct in filial respects was as much the consequence of his father's folly as of his own defects. George III had a strict sense of responsibility towards his children, but he had not any conception of helping them to grow up in the development of natural domestic affections. He ruled them as he attempted to rule his ministers, parliament, and the people. Of intentional unkindness he was innocent, but a steady application of discipline without the smallest reference to the minds to be disciplined,

had particularly in his eldest son induced a habit of bridling resentment. We have seen how the prince as a child would break out into little storms of revolt. As he grew to manhood, a naturally intemperate character nursed a growing hostility towards a father whom he had come to regard rather as a jailer than as a friend. This explains if it does not excuse the unseemly spectacle of a king, whose private manners were irreproachable, being treated by his heir with open contempt and ridicule. The prince's graver misdemeanors were accompanied by petty discourtesies designed in wanton offense. When he was to dine with the king, he invariably arrived an hour late. His uncle, the Duke of Cumberland, whose own quarrels with the king found a graceless satisfaction in turning the prince's apartments in the Queen's House into a combined gambling-den, pawnshop, and brothel, taught a ready pupil to disregard the common civilities as he passed his father in the corridors of the palace. "When we hunt together," the king pathetically complained, "neither my son nor my brother speak to me; and lately, when the chase ended at a village where there was but a single postchaise to be hired, my son and brother got into it, and drove to London, leaving me to go home in a cart if I could find one." On being asked why he endured it, "What can I do?" he replied. "If I resent it they will make my son leave me, and break out, which is what they wish."

The Duke of Cumberland, however, was a boor, and his company began to pall on a prince who affected some elegance in his profligacy. He took to calling his nephew "Taffy," and was told to mend his manners. The young man found a far more agreeable associate in Charles Fox, to whose example the king began to attribute his son's conduct. Charles's considerate charm towards the feelings

of others, outside the conventions of debate, was universally allowed, and there is not the least reason to believe that at any time he could have encouraged the prince's ungainly displays of rudeness. But his influence in other ways was undeniable, and it was highly distasteful to the king. Fox liked the prince, and also he knew that his political connection as heir, and potentially as regent, was a power that might prove of immense weight in opposing a sovereign from whom liberal opinions could never hope for support. It is as foolish to assert that Fox corrupted the morals of his young friend and patron, as it would be to pretend that he moderated them by prudent counsel. The prince, who became a member of Brooks's in 1784, was not likely to find in Fox any reluctance to share his fortunes at Newmarket or the tables, or to meet as many pledges as he liked to give in audit ale and claret.

Shortly before North's defeat, a more complicated anxiety had disturbed the king's relations with his heir. In August, 1781, George wrote to his minister, "I am sorry to be obliged to open a subject to L[d] North that has long given me much pain. . . . My eldest son got last year into a very improper connection with an actress and woman of indifferent character . . . a multitude of letters past, which she had threatened to publish unless he, in short, bought them of her. He made her very foolish promisses, which, undoubtedly, by her conduct to him, she entirely cancelled. I have thought it right to authorize the getting them from her . . . [and now learn that she will return them] on receiving £5000, undoubtedly an enormous sum; but I wish to get my son out of this shameful scrape. . . . I am happy at being able to say that I never was personally engaged in such a transaction, which perhaps makes me feel this the stronger."

THE PRINCE OF WALES
From the portrait by A. Wivell

The lady in question was Mary Robinson, a young woman of great beauty, whose education had been directed by no less a person than Miss Hannah More. She first attracted the attention of the prince in 1778, during her performance of Perdita in "A Winter's Tale." Clandestine trysts in Kew Gardens were arranged, she became his mistress, and received from him a bond for twenty thousand pounds to be paid on his reaching the age of twenty-one.

She has left her own account of their first meeting. "A few words, and those scarcely articulated, were uttered by the prince, when a noise of people approaching from the palace startled us. The moon was now rising, and the idea of his royal highness being seen out at so unusual an hour, terrified the whole groupe. After a few more words of the most affectionate nature, uttered by the prince, we parted. The rank of the prince no longer chilled into awe that being who now considered him as the lover and the friend. The graces of his person, the tenderness of melodious, yet manly, voice, will be remembered by me, till every vision of this changing scene shall be forgotten." In three years Perdita's charm had lost its hold on her royal lover, who was at length, in 1784, induced by Fox to redeem his bond by a pension of five hundred pounds a year. Charles's solicitude was generous, but it cannot be said to have been wholly disinterested. In September, 1782, Lady Sarah Lennox, who had recently become Lady Sarah Napier, wrote to Lady Susan O'Brien, * "I

* Née Lady Susan Fox Strangways, Lord Ilchester's daughter, the niece of Lord Holland, and so Charles's cousin, and kinswoman to her lifelong friend Lady Sarah, of whom we have already heard. See *Life and Letters of Lady Sarah Lennox,* 1910. Her marriage to the actor William O'Brien, caused something of a county sensation, which is obliquely recorded on a mural tablet in the church of Mr. Hardy's Melstock. Local society did not care for association with the handsome actor, and preferred to celebrate him as "Receiver General of Dorset."

hear Charles saunters about the streets, and brags that he has not taken a pen in hand since he was out of place [he resigned in July as we shall see]. Pour se désennuyer he *lives* with Mrs. Robinson, goes to Sadler's Wells with her, and is all day figuring away with her. I long to tell him he does it to show that he is superior to Alcibiades, for *his* courtezan forsook him when he was unfortunate, and Mrs. Robinson takes *him* up." And Walpole, in November, has a fragmentary note: "Fox's idleness and love for Mrs. Robinson." Contemporary opinion thought highly of Perdita as an actress; she also was a poet, and if not a very distinguished one, she had sufficient intelligence to enliven her celebrated beauty. Her society must have been very agreeable, and Charles might have done a good deal worse than spend his evenings with her at Sadler's Wells. In 1799, she "undertook the poetical department of the Morning Post," but died in the following year at the age of forty-two. The gossip of the time had it that the king suspected Fox of having acted an accommodating part in her introduction to the prince; that Charles did so there is not the slightest evidence, but it is not unlikely that the king was as ready to believe this as anything else to his detriment.

2

Fox took up his new task with enthusiasm. "I am very well in health and spirits," he had written a few months before, when the prospects of office were still uncertain. Now success invigorated him, and he still further braced his habits to the obligations of his work. "He never touched a card," says Lord Holland, "and was during all his three short administrations assiduous in his duties." Members of Brooks's who had paid up arrears

of subscription in order that they might boast of familiarity with a minister were mortified by his prolonged absence. At once he showed that he meant to use power firmly but modestly. Industry, and a knowledge of home and foreign affairs such as surprised men far older and more experienced than himself, were supplemented by candor and good humor. His secretaries saw from the first that he knew what he wanted, and respected an energy and decision that were not wasted in vexatious meddling. He gave himself no airs, and he stood no nonsense. He was a man of the world, and declined to sacrifice reality to doctrinaire policy or the prejudices of class. Anyone who wanted to see him could do so, but he had little patience with ignorance, and none with sophistry. All the natural graces of his character expanded in authority, and he spared neither labor nor good-will to make himself worthy of a place that he earnestly wished to enjoy to his own and the public good. He knew that his association with the king would demand tact, and he was prepared to exercise it. Had this been his most serious difficulty, he might well have made a great thing of his first term of major office. But the Rockingham ministry of 1782 was divided in itself, and moreover its chief was a dying man.

William Petty, second Earl of Shelburne, was at this time forty-five years of age; Rockingham, seven years older. The leader was a Whig without compromise, determined to oppose the obnoxious system of crown influence to the extent of his not very remarkable capacities. Shelburne, on the other hand, was a Whig whose principles had become embittered by political conflict, and whose character, while it did not lack courage, had a slippery habit. Fixed as he had been in his condemnation of the American war, he had always sympathized

with the royal views on independence, and it was to him that the king looked for support in the new ministry. It was with him that the king held personal conversations at the very moment when Rockingham was preparing his cabinet list, actually declining to see the prime minister himself, and sending all messages through the favored secretary. Fox knew this, and was filled with misgivings. No sooner had they been appointed, than he told Shelburne to his face that he saw plainly "that the administration was to consist of two parts, one belonging to the king, and the other to the public." The observation was just, but it was a bad beginning. Worse followed when Shelburne took it upon himself to fill a vacant seat in the cabinet, informing Rockingham that he had invited Dunning to become chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, with a barony.

Parliament met on April 8 under the new government. On the 12th, Fox reported to Fitzpatrick that at the cabinet meeting of that day there had already been high words, and on the 15th, that another meeting had been "very teazing and wrangling." On the 28th, "Shelburne shows himself more jealous of my encroaching on his department, and wishing very much to encroach on mine. He affects the minister more and more every day, and is, I believe, perfectly confident that the king intends to make him so." So difficult is the situation, that already Charles is contemplating loss of office, saying that if they can remain in long enough to deal "a good stout blow to the influence of the crown" it does not matter how soon they are out, leaving Shelburne to form what government he can. Fox's letters to Fitzpatrick were addressed to Dublin Castle, where his friend was acting as secretary to the Duke of Portland, who was lord lieutenant. The

pacification of Ireland was the first business of the new ministers, as a preliminary to clearing up the foreign chaos. In this undertaking, Fox had suspicions, confirmed by Fitzpatrick, that Shelburne was saying one thing in the House of Lords, and another to Portland.

While Shelburne was unable to make headway in the cabinet, his interest grew with the king. Proposals brought forward by him were rejected, among them one for bringing North to public trial, but when Rockingham brought forward his own for reforming the court influence and establishment, it was to Shelburne that the king turned for relief, conducting with him a highly improper correspondence, in which he asked how Rockingham could best be circumvented. It soon became perfectly clear to his colleagues that Shelburne must either leave the cabinet or wreck it. North's friends were still able as often as not to carry a division; it was bad enough for a government to be living on a wisp of a majority, and uncertain at that, but to be continually harassed by the intrigues of one of its own members was intolerable.

These were all rather disgusting quarrels, and had Charles's record during the Rockingham administration amounted to no more than even an honorable part in them, there is little that could be said for it. But there was much beside. Writing to Sir Horace Mann in May of the already critical condition of the ministry, Walpole fears for what will happen "unless some master-genius gains the ascendant. Mr. Fox alone seems to be such a man. He already shines as greatly in Place as he did in Opposition, though infinitely more difficult a task." As foreign secretary he carried out a very solid term of work in negotiating peace with France. When the government

was a week old, a cabinet minute was entered recommending that the king direct Mr. Fox to open treaty with Holland.* The transaction hung fire, and Fox, anxious to do something that might restore British connections on the Continent, made approaches to the King of Prussia, who, however, was old, and all for keeping himself to himself.

Of greater importance was the French question, and in this again Fox found himself in conflict with Shelburne. By a fatuous arrangement then prevailing in the machinery of government, the conduct of foreign affairs was jointly in the hands of the two secretaries of state,† and while Shelburne's commissioner was treating with Benjamin Franklin in Paris, Fox's was treating with the French minister in the same city, and a pretty game of cross espionage ensued, in which Shelburne was the more cunning adept. On May 18, however, Fox was empowered to instruct his representative to treat specifically for peace with both France and America, with full acknowledgment of the latter's independence. The negotiations were of great length, and today make very dull reading. But Fox at every step discovered what he believed to be traces of Shelburne's duplicity. To follow in detail the voluminous correspondence by which Charles attempted to keep himself informed of every move in the business, is to be convinced that the traces were no hallucination. And Walpole's testimony, prejudiced as it may be, has his usual air of convincing shrewdness. "His falsehood," he says of Shelburne, "was so constant and notorious, that it was rather his profession than his in-

* An amusing phrase with a modern connotation occurs in a letter from Fox to Fitzpatrick: "People here are very sanguine of peace with Holland; I *doubt*—I don't think." The italics are Charles's.

† Shelburne had the northern department—i.e., America (with Ireland); Fox, the southern, i.e., Europe.

strument. . . . He feared neither danger nor detection. He was so fond of insincerity as if he had been the inventor, and practised it with as little caution as if he thought nobody else had discovered the secret." Even the king had spoken of him as "the Jesuit of Berkeley Square."

For Fox to run in double harness with such a man was impossible. How he would have concluded negotiations so delicate, and so hampered by intrigue, we cannot tell. In their midst, on July 1, Rockingham died; and John Wesley was able to note in his journal: "He lately had forty thousand a year in England, and fifteen or twenty in Ireland. And what has he now? Six foot of earth."

The king, during the illness of his first minister, sent no inquiry as to his condition. Shelburne was asked to form a ministry. Charles represented to the king that the earl was not a person who would carry the confidence of his colleagues or the country, was snubbed for his pains, and refused to take office in the reconstruction. It is probable that even had Rockingham lived, Charles would have declined to continue the pretense of cooperation with Shelburne. The most acute difference between them at the end was on the question of American independence. After the first proposals to Paris, Fox was convinced that acknowledgment of this was essential as a first measure, and should not be reserved as part of a general treaty. Shelburne, partly by conviction, and partly in deference to the king, whom he now used every occasion to conciliate, opposed the motion with great vigor, while assuring Franklin that not Fox, but he himself, was the true friend to whom America should look. That America needed no such assurances from either quarter, does not add to Shelburne's honors.

3

Shelburne held power for eight months. Most of Rockingham's ministers remained with him, Lord John Cavendish alone following Fox in resigning from cabinet rank. Strong pressure was brought upon Charles to persuade him that to go out was desertion, the Duke of Richmond being importunate almost to the point of a personal quarrel. "The Duke of Richmond," wrote Shelburne to the king on July 4, "condemns in very strong terms Mr. Fox's precipitate and unadvis'd conduct."* On the 30th of June, in expectation of Rockingham's death, he had written: "The [second] point respects the weight which Your Majesty would think it proper to give Mr. Fox in case of any new arrangement. I have since Fryday seen the most material persons. . . . I find it the opinion of *all* that no Price is too great to pay to obtain the continuance of that description of Men, if it be but for the present, who I very plainly see are too open to be operated upon by Mr. Fox's Habits, Assiduity and Address." † But Charles knew that there could be no accommodation between Shelburne and himself, and was firm in his refusal.

By far the most notable addition made by Shelburne to the cabinet was that occasioned by Cavendish's resignation. At the age of twenty-three, William Pitt became chancellor of the exchequer. This was a blow to one of Fox's cherished hopes, but it was not wholly unexpected. During the Rockingham session, Pitt had been equivocal in a support that Fox was learning to value beyond that of any other man in the House. "I wish I could say I was quite as well satisfied in regard to the other person," Fox had written of Pitt in May: "he is very civil and oblig-

* Fortescue, VI, 75.
† *Idem.*, 69.

ing, profuse of compliment in public, but he has more than once taken a line that has alarmed me." It was the beginning of a breach that steadily widened.

Pitt's cool deliberation, his fixed desire for power, and his confident self-esteem, must always have been at odds with Fox's impulsive and lonely genius. But at the opening of his career, there seemed to be promise of an understanding between the two greatest political minds of their age, that might have ripened into a union of incalculable benefit to their country. We have seen examples of Fox's earlier kindness to the younger man. And now in office he had been no less generous. Writing as secretary of state to the king on April 30, 1782, he referred handsomely to a suggestion put forward by "Mr William Pitt in one of the most eloquent speeches that ever was made." * Not only was the older man foremost in recognizing the almost unexampled talents of the younger; he also admired his fresh and eager courage with something that might easily have been fired into affection. Moreover, Pitt at first showed signs of an enlightened enthusiasm, that encouraged Fox to hope that here was a youth who might become incomparably a partner and friend in his own liberal ambitions. Pitt's first motion of consequence in the House had been for parliamentary reform, and Fox had supported it in defeat. But Pitt's character was developing away from Fox's ideals, and his alliance with Shelburne left Charles disillusioned. After Shelburne's accession there was but one sitting of parliament before recess; it was taken up by ministerial explanations, during which Pitt observed that it must appear that Mr. Fox had resigned not on grounds of public interest but in the disappointment of his own hopes of preferment to chief office.

* Fortescue, V, 507.

4

Charles was still but thirty-three, and was not likely to be inconsolable in any reverse of fortune. He took to his clubs again, he went a-roving with Mrs. Robinson as we have seen, and he further cultivated the society of the prince, who dined with him on the day of his resignation, and assured him that he should always look on Rockingham's friends as the men most to be relied upon in the country.

Charles at this time used to hold levees at his St. James's Street lodgings, and there the prince frequently attended. Our modern standards of hygiene may be startled by Walpole's picture of the scene, but it is to be remembered that hot and cold water on the latest plan was not then a feature of domestic architecture, and that the famous elegance of the eighteenth century veneered a mortal deal of dirt. Not much change in these matters had taken place in the century since Pepys, having washed his feet, and finding that it gave him a cold, decided not to wash them again. Charles, then, rising late, would receive his disciples, "his bristling black person, and shaggy breast quite open, and rarely purified by any ablutions, was wrapped in a foul linen night-gown, and his bushy hair dishevelled. In these cynic weeds, and with epicurean good-humor, did he dictate his politics, and in this school did the heir of the crown attend his lessons and imbibe them." A little untidy, no doubt, but they must have been tonic parties for a young man who had been brought up in the prim austerities of Kew and the Queen's House. And if a bottle was sometimes opened, it does not appear that the prince was obliged

to go to St. James's Street for a drink when he wanted it.*

During the recess Shelburne was employed in the negotiations for peace with America and France, and the assembling of parliament was postponed until December 5, in the hope that he might be able to announce his success in both endeavors. As the date approached, it was realized that, while preliminary articles had been signed with America, the French difficulties could not be solved in time, and the ministers hurriedly investigated possible means of strengthening their position in what promised to be a very dissatisfied House. Shelburne, deciding that among the men out of office North still had the greatest number of votes at his command, conveniently forgot his anxiety for a public trial, and proposed to approach the former minister. Pitt flatly declined to take part in any such arrangement, but advised a further appeal to Fox. It was Shelburne's turn to decline. He had opened his mind too freely to the king to allow such a move, even had his own inclinations permitted. On July 16, he had written, enclosing a paper, "the contents [of which] must decide on Fox's character with the Publick, if they are ever call'd for by Parliament. I am afraid Mr. Fox has none to lose with Your Majesty."† And on August 7, his Majesty expressed strong approval of a scheme to keep Shelburne informed of the "connections of each individual" in the House of Commons, such a provision being "very material to counteract the Activity of Mr. Fox, who every honest Man . . . must wish to the utmost to keep out of Power." ‡ Thus the sessions opened with rela-

* The third Lord Holland notes on the above passage from Walpole: "This description, though of course a strong caricature, yet certainly has much humour, and I must needs acknowledge, from my boyish recollection of a morning in St James's Street, some truth to recommend it."

† Fortescue, VI, 88.

‡ *Idem.*, 97.

tions tautly strained between the first minister and the brilliant young chancellor, who was to be by far the most important government voice in the Commons. The king, in his speech from the throne, acknowledged the independence of America in words that left no doubt as to his feeling. "In thus admitting their separation from the crown of these Kingdoms, I have sacrificed every consideration of my own to the wishes and opinions of my people."

In the debate on the address, Fox said, "If any peer should dare to impeach the Earl of Shelburne for having done this, although it has been said that 'it would be the ruin of the country, and he would be a traitor who should do it,' I will stand up as his advocate—I will defend him against such artful and insidious charges—I will hold him harmless, and protect him from the accusation of 'having dared to give away the right of Great Britain,' and pledge myself that the recognition of the independence of America shall not be 'stained with the blood of the Minister who should sign it.'" The stroke was a deft one. The words that Fox quoted had been Shelburne's own.

Further dissension rose in the cabinet. Fox insisted on knowing whether the clause in the preliminary American peace articles, relating to independence, was to be taken as irrevocable, or as only contingent on the conclusion of peace with France, which was a condition of the articles in general. Pitt replied that in effect it was irrevocable. Shelburne was quick to note the indiscretion and wrote off reassuringly to the king, "Mr. Fox affected to consider this as a concession to the Opposition . . . It created some uneasiness, but . . . Mr. Pitt undertakes that Mr. Fox will not carry through the deception."* The

* Fortescue, VI, 175.

king was furious, declared that Pitt did not know what he was talking about, and that if the French treaty proved abortive, he should by no means look upon the recognition of America's claim as binding. In view of the actual state of America, the argument was fantastic, but the king insisted that Pitt ought to withdraw his words, and once more raked over the ministerial smother.

5

On January 20, preliminary treaties of peace were signed with France and Spain, and a truce declared with Holland. The terms were neither very good nor very bad, but they were bad enough to give the opposition an opening that was eagerly taken. Fox said that he could see in them nothing but concessions, which was not too palpable an exaggeration of the truth to excite the prejudices of national pride. It must be remembered that Fox had stedfastly supported the crown in the French war, and his opposition to Shelburne's peace cannot be dismissed as merely mischievous. Amendments to the address on the peace were carried by the opposition, on February 17, 1783, by a majority of sixteen. On the 21st, a motion that the cessions to France were unjustified was brought in by Lord John Cavendish, and, after debate that lasted until seven in the morning, was carried by nineteen. It amounted to a direct vote of censure, and Shelburne was left with no alternative to resignation.

In the meantime there had been a rapid development of events behind the parliamentary scene. Suspecting that his peace was likely to prove unpopular, Shelburne had at last yielded to Pitt's entreaties, and consented to approach Fox. Pitt visited Charles at his lodgings on this mission, and was told that before Fox would come in, Shelburne must go out. Shelburne sent his report to the

king, who replied, on February 11: "I am not in the least surprised that Mr. Pitt's interview with Mr. Fox ended as abruptly as the hastiness and impoliteness of the latter naturally led me to expect."* The confidence of Charles's decision was explained when he spoke on February 17, in a passage that dealt openly with rumors that had for some days been agitating Shelburne's counsels:

I am accused [said Fox] of forming a junction with a noble person, whose principles I have been in the habit of opposing for the last seven years of my life. . . . That such an alliance has taken place I can by no means aver. That I shall have the honour of concurring with the noble lord in the blue ribbon on the present question is very certain; and if men of honour can meet on points of general national concern, I can see no reason for calling such a meeting an unnatural junction. It is neither wise nor noble to keep up animosities for ever. It is neither just nor candid to keep up animosity when the cause of it is no more. It is not in my nature to bear malice, or to live in ill-will. My friendships are perpetual, my enmities are not so. . . . When a man ceases to be what he was, when the opinions that made him obnoxious are changed, he is then no more my enemy, but my friend. The American war was the cause of the enmity between the noble lord and myself. The American war, and the American question is at an end. The noble lord has profited from fatal experience. While that system was maintained, nothing could be more asunder than the noble lord and myself. But it is now no more; and it is therefore wise and candid to put an end also to the ill-will, the animosity, the rancour, and the feuds which it occasioned. I am free to acknowledge, that when I was the friend of the noble lord in the blue ribbon, I found him open and sincere; when the enemy, honourable and manly. I never had reason to say of the noble lord in the blue ribbon that he practised any of those subterfuges, tricks, and stratagems, which I found in others; any of those behindhand and paltry manœuvres which destroy confidence between human beings, and degrade the character of the statesman and the man.

* Fortescue, VI, 237.

In fact, North and Fox had in private meetings come to an agreement to act together in the House against Shelburne. When on February 19 the minister was defeated on a fundamental issue for the second time in three days, their purpose had been achieved, and the field was theirs. The famous coalition, branded so often as infamous, was about to be born.

The gravamen of the charge against Fox is that he was uniting with a man whose political conduct he had constantly denounced. The extremes of language which we have frequently seen Charles applying to North, may be summarized in a single example. As late as March 5, 1782, he had said: "From the moment when I should make any terms with one of them [North and his ministers], from that moment I will rest satisfied to be called the most infamous of mankind. I could not for an instant think of a coalition with men who . . . have shown themselves void of every principle of honour and honesty." Granted the heat of a debate that Charles knew at the time to be of a decisive nature, these are words difficult to repudiate. And yet, in the passage just quoted from Charles's speech of February 17, is not the repudiation a fair one? If he had said many hard and bitter things of North, we recall that he had also on many occasions spoken handsomely of the qualities that he now eulogizes. And is it not true in all human affairs, and particularly in the history of political affairs, that circumstances do often quite honorably alter the most unlikely cases? Without the least desire to make the worse appear the better reason, it is difficult for candor to take those words of the 17th at anything but their simple face value.

The accomplished biographers of Shelburne (Lord Fitzmaurice) and Pitt (Earl Stanhope), speak in unison,

and to a familiar measure. "Yet when the prizes of office rose in view," says one, "the high crimes, the misdemeanours, the want of common honour and honesty of North, were alike forgotten by Fox"; and the other, "yet now, as the overthrow of Lord Shelburne rose before them as a tempting prize, these two eminent men, in an evil hour for their own fame, were gradually drawn together." It is a matter of opinion. We can but assess motives from such knowledge as we are able to form of character. To believe that there was nothing contemptible to which Fox would not stoop in order to secure the prizes of office, may be a view possible to an impartial study of such records as we have of the man. But it is doubtless clear to any reader of the present work that it could not be so to the writer.

That it was worth Charles's or any man's while to unite with North is very doubtful, since North was always to remain as weak and unprincipled in politics as he had always been. But, in default of accepting Charles as a common placeman, we have to find some explanation of the union other than his taste for prizes. And the discovery seems simple enough. That Fox overstated the legitimate objection to Shelburne's peace terms, we may allow, but that it is possible to exaggerate his genuine mistrust of Shelburne himself, we do not. It was plain that Shelburne was daily falling more and more under the influence of the king, and the consequent danger to the state was one that to Fox's mind, in the light of seven years' experience, must be averted at any cost. The chief aim of his long and impassioned opposition had been directed against this very evil.* Shelburne must be over-

* How closely, and how privately, Shelburne was at this time in the king's counsels, is newly demonstrated in the fifth and sixth volumes of *The Correspondence of King George the Third.*

thrown. The peace proposals were a likely occasion to this end. But Fox needed support—the support of additional votes, and for this he must go to North or nobody. And it was true that, in the march of events, the North of today was not the North of yesterday. It may be added that Fox was aware that for the last four years North himself had had no real heart in the policy that he had been forced by the king to administer.

Fox was no fool. He knew very well that the step he was taking would loosen a thousand censorious tongues, and he took it. His motive was not the inordinate desire for a place that he had voluntarily relinquished less than a year before, but what he conceived to be public necessity. His judgment may have been at fault, but it was honest. The coalition failed, and brought little credit to its leaders. But it has not commonly been remembered in its favor, that it did in fact turn out Shelburne, who, given time, had in him the making of an even more disastrous minister than North at his worst.

6

On March 11, Walpole wrote to Lady Ossory, "I hope, Madam, you have been rejoiced at the appointment of every new Prime Minister that we have had for this last fortnight—Mr. W. Pitt, the Duke of Portland, Lord Temple, Lord Gower, and Lord Thurlow. There may have been more for aught I know. . . . At present there is no premier at all, at least there was not a quarter of an hour ago." Walpole's pleasantry was near the truth. The king in the new crisis was obsessed by one idea—that if by any device it were possible, the government should not include Fox. On August 7, 1782, when he had written that every honest man must wish to keep Mr. Fox

out of powers, he had also written to North, asking him to bring his followers to the support of Shelburne in the forthcoming session, so that "I may be enabled to keep the Constitution from being entirely annihilated, which must be the case if Mr. Fox and his Associates are not withstood . . . the present contest . . . is no less than whether the sole direction of my Kingdoms shall be trusted in the hands of Mr. Fox; Lord North has long known my opinion of that gentleman, which has been if possible more rivited by three months experience of Him in Office, which finally determined Me never to employ Him again. Consequently the contest is become personal and He indeed sees it also in that point of view."* On his own resignation, Shelburne encouraged this determination, and made the astonishing proposal, accepted by the king, that Pitt, still under twenty-four years of age, should be invited to form a ministry. Flattered as he was, Pitt had the good sense to know that he had no better chance than Shelburne of controlling a majority in the House, and declined an offer that would mean no more than obtaining "the chariot for a day." The king was put considerably out of temper by the refusal. "I am clear that Mr. Pitt means to play false, and wants I should again negotiate with the Coalition," he wrote on March 25, at 15 m. pt. 7 A.M. Pitt's letter definitely declining office was dated the same day at one-thirty noon, and at 35 m. pt. 4 P.M. the king was "much hurt" at conduct so insensitive to the gravity of the crisis.† Other possible candidates were approached, as indicated in Walpole's letter, with no success. The king then begged North to take office independently of Fox, and was refused. The coalitionists in the meantime, confident that the king would

* Fortescue, VI, 97.
† *Idem,* 309-311.

be forced to accept them as such, had laid their plans. It was Fox's idea that there should be a nominal head of the government, with the real power residing in North and himself as joint secretaries of state. The Duke of Portland had already consented to become this figurehead. After protracted court resistance, during which the overtures to Pitt were renewed, the Duke of Portland kissed hands as first lord of the treasury on April 2, and the king could complain to the end of his life that the coalition ministry of 1783 had been thrust upon him by the machinations of wicked men. Such had been the king's extremity that at one moment he seriously contemplated abdication, and among his manuscript papers is a remarkable document to which Sir John Fortescue assigns the date March, 1783, in which he announces to parliament his decision to resign the throne.* But he faced what to him was an all but intolerable situation. Much as he resented Fox, his chief anger fell on North. Fox, after all, owed him nothing, while North at least had reaped very ample benefits from his personal kindness. He felt that he had been betrayed by his old minister, and in the most injurious manner. Meeting the aged Earl of Guilford at a drawing-room, he exclaimed, "Did I ever think that Lord North would deliver me up to Mr. Fox!" At the levees attended by the new ministers, while he received Charles graciously, he received North "with the utmost coolness, and continued to treat him with visible aversion." One observer, however, noted that when Fox kissed hands, the king "turned back his ears and eyes just like the horse at Astley's, when the tailor he had determined to throw was getting on him." And in conversation with others, he "loaded [Fox] with every expression of abhorrence."

* Fortescue, VI, 316–17.

The coalition ministry included—besides Portland, North, and Fox—Cavendish at the exchequer, Keppel at the admiralty, Fox's old friend Carlisle as lord privy seal, with Loughborough (Wedderburn) as one of the commissioners for the custody of the Great Seal, and Burke, Fitzpatrick, and Sheridan outside the cabinet. The other names need not be enumerated. The most notable absentee was the Duke of Richmond. It may be mentioned that one of the principal agents in negotiating between North and Fox had been Adam, the duelist. Charles, on taking office, was reelected without opposition for Westminster, as was Cavendish for York, a suggestion that public indignation at the "unnatural alliance" has sometimes been exaggerated, though Walpole's "some hissing at Westminster" becomes in Pitt's biographer, "the multitude received [Fox] with hootings and hissings, and his eloquent voice could not be heard."

7

Fox's part in the ill-starred ministry may be briefly told. At his first royal audience, the topic being the Prince of Wales, Charles assured the king "that he had never said a word to the Prince that he would not have been glad to have His Majesty hear," adding that he had ventured no more in the way of encouraging the prince's personal ambitions than to promise that as occasion arose he would support any motion to provide him with a sufficient personal establishment. He subsequently supported a proposed allowance of a hundred thousand a year, which the king, however, succeeded in getting reduced, and having scored the point of modifying his heir's obligation to the obnoxious minister, made up some part of the deficiency out of his own civil list. But the prince

realized who his friend was, and the king watched his son's attachment for Charles with growing jealousy. In May, Pitt again made proposals for parliamentary reform, and again Fox supported him in an adverse vote. The liberality of temper that Charles displayed in this, and the sincerity of his professions that he could bear no malice, are further illustrated in a correspondence to be found in the Hinchingbrooke papers, of which the following passages are now first printed.

No member of the North administration had been more out of sympathy with Fox than Sandwich, and none had been more severely attacked by the opposition. On the various occasions when Fox had been consulted on the possibility of coalescing with the government, Sandwich had invariably been one of the ministers named by him as unacceptable in any arrangement that might be made. Sandwich's heir, Lord Hinchingbrooke, was now in the House of Commons, and from a letter of February, 1783, it appears that he was taking a line contrary to his father's wishes. Sandwich, nevertheless, approached North in his son's interest, and received a letter, dated February 23, saying, "I do not know whether I shall have anything to do in a new arrangement. . . . Lord Hinchingbrooke may however be sure that if [I do], he will certainly be among the first for whom I shall exert myself." Three days later North writes again, "Whether I shall have any share in the formation of a new administration, is now more uncertain and more improbable than it was when I wrote to you before. You may, however, depend upon it that I will have part of none where a due attention is not paid to my former colleagues in office."

On April 4, Sandwich wrote to North: "Your Lordship cannot be surprised that I am much hurt at the account given me by Lord Hinchingbrooke, of a con-

versation he had with Your Lordship this day. After the assurance that I had received from you that you would bear a part in no administration where a due attention was not paid to your former colleagues in office, I did not think that I should have been one of those colleagues whose interests had not met with due attention; for your Lordship will observe that I cannot think the offer of an employment to my son . . . is all the attention that is due to me." Sandwich adds an affectionate tribute to his son's share in the transaction. In an undated letter, North replied: "You use me very ill in supposing that my having been hitherto able to procure only an office for Lord Hinchingbrooke, was owing to my not wishing to pay attention to both," and explained that there were insufficient places at the ministry's disposal to satisfy claims at the rate of more than one apiece to a family. On April 18, Lord Chesterfield, in a letter from the same papers, wrote to Sandwich, "I am very glad Lord Hinchingbrooke has got the stag-hounds, as I think he will like that situation."

On the 25th, Portland was in the correspondence, and wrote to Sandwich, that while at the moment there was nothing to offer, "I should certainly be very glad that the present administration should have the advantage of your Lordship's support . . . and whenever an arrangement can be made that will enable me to give you an effectual proof of the sincerity of this profession, I shall offer it with pleasure. . . . I remain only hopeful of some more favourable opportunity of acquiring the benefit of your assistance and influence." On the 27th, Portland assures him of "my readiness to subscribe to the terms upon which you propose to enter into conversation." The following day Hinchingbrooke wrote to his father: "I must insist that you do not think of lowering your credit on my

account. If I could have accepted the office offered me, with any degree of propriety, I should have been glad to have done it. I think Lord North's behaviour has been scandalous with regard to you, and I shall certainly have no connection with him. I make no doubt of the Duke of Portland's wishes to engage you, because he cannot do without assistance; but if that should be the case, and the administration dissolve soon, I beg that you may not say that I was the occasion of your entering into it."

Three following letters from Portland deal with a minor resignation that makes an opening for Sandwich until something more suitable can be provided. The office was that of ranger of the parks, which Sandwich resigned on the fall of the coalition, and four months later Sandwich is in communication with Fox. On September 3, Charles writes from Wimbledon:

My Lord—

I am much obliged to you for your letter relative to Mr. Pardoe, but it is impossible for me at this moment to give you any answer to it. It is so clearly my opinion that a plan ought to be adopted, putting the whole of the Direction [of the East India Company] upon a different footing, or possibly even substituting a new commission in the place of the Directors, and that the plan ought to be put into execution immediately after the meeting of parliament, that I cannot enter into any engagements upon the idea of filling up the direction in the old way. In the meantime I feel very sensibly what your Lordship says in favour of Mr. Pardoe, and I do assure you that in this and every other instance, I should be very happy to show the truth and regard with which I am, my Lord . . .

At the end of November, when the coalition crisis on the East India bill was approaching, Sandwich was in touch with Shelburne, who was thought to have fresh prospects of office, but the following letters show that, in the critical stages of the bills that were within a month

to lead to the government's defeat, Fox looked upon Sandwich's support as assured and valuable. On November 27, Sandwich wrote a long letter to Charles, expressing strongly the astonishment with which he had heard Lord Hinchingbrooke announce that he proposed to vote against the ministers. "It may perhaps appear extraordinary, that I should enter into a matter of this nature with a person with whom I have had so short a political acquaintance; but my sentiments with regard to political engagements are such, and differ so much from my son's, that I am hurt beyond measure at the idea that persons who do not know me may possibly imagine that this young man's absurdities may originate from, or be countenanced by me; but, as I have already said, I am sure Lord North will acquit me from any such imputation, and will describe to you, better than I can, the distress I am under upon this occasion." On November 30th, Fox replied, from St. James's Place:

My Lord,

I am exceedingly obliged to your Lordship for your letter, informing me of what had passed with Lord Hinchingbrooke, and I have no doubt but you were as well pleased as I was to find that he voted in the majority. Now that he is embarked in the question, I can make no doubt of his going on with us. There is to be an opposition and division again to-morrow, when it will be very material to maintain our superiority, or, if possible, to increase it.

Mr. Stephenson * voted with us, although Robinson * (of whom, between ourselves, I have suspicions) told me that he would not. Sir William James, Mr Pardoe, Mr Durand, and Sir Walter Rawlinson were all, as I understand, absent. With regard to the first,† it is as much as could be expected from him, all things considered, and I expect your Lordship to say that you did not think any interference on

* Members of Sandwich's political connection.

† Sir William James, chairman of the East India Company directors.

your part with the last * was likely to be serviceable on this occasion. But with respect to Durand and Pardoe, I should hope better, and of this I am sure, that if they do not attend, it will not be your fault, because I am sure you must see the importance of great majorities, in this question, in the same light that I do.

The enemy has nearly given up the House of Commons (though this, by the way, should not make us remiss) as untenable, and professes to have great hopes in the House of Lords. I have no doubt but your victory there will be equal to ours, if similar exertions are made; but there are many peers very friendly, who will never come up without being pressed.

I am with great truth and regard,

C. J. Fox.

The Commons majorities, as Charles says, were substantial; but in the Lords there was less security, and it was there that the trouble came, as we shall see. On December 6, Fox wrote again from St. James's Place to Sandwich:

My Lord,

I am sure you will allow the excuse of a hurry of business, for not having sooner answered your last letter. I am very sorry to hear Lord Mulgrave † is dissatisfied, but cannot even guess the reason. I know that both the D. of Portland's relation, Mr Jocelyn, and Lord North's son, were set aside in order to make Mr Phipps Aide de Camp to the Lord Lieutenant; and with regard to the majority he asked, he must know as well as I do that it was out of our power. I shall be very glad to talk this or any other matter over with your Lordship, whenever you will do me the honour to call upon me.

I believe we shall be very strong in the House of Lords; but it should be remembered that proxies, which form a con-

* Of Sir Walter Rawlinson and Mr. Durand I find no mention elsewhere. Pardoe is referred to in Sandwich's letter above.

† Lord Mulgrave—Constantine John Phipps, second Baron Mulgrave, in the Irish peerage, M.P. for Huntingdon, and a commissioner of the East India board.

siderable part of our strength, can not be used in a committee, and all exertions ought therefore to be used to bring up even those whose proxies we already have. Do you know anything of Lord Exeter * and Lord Dudley? I am told the former would have much weight with Lord Harborough.

I am very truly my Lord

C. J. Fox.

This was eleven days before the vote in the Lords brought the Coalition to an end.

8

During the summer of 1783, Fox was, officially, chiefly employed in the conduct of foreign affairs. His efforts to restore British prestige in the association of Europe were well-intentioned, if they did not go very far. After all, six months gives a man less than a sporting chance to make an impression on European history. But his previ-

* This Earl of Exeter does not even find a place in *The Dictionary of National Biography*. But it so happens that Sandwich had been soliciting his vote, and his answer, written three days before Fox's letter, is also preserved at Hinchingbrooke. Although it has no immediate place in our story, it is so attractive a little masterpiece of sly aloofness, that I take pleasure in printing it:

December 3, 1783

My Lord,

Accept my thanks for the honour of your letter and opinion, received last night, on the bill now depending in the House of Commons, which I design to attend when brought before the Lords next week. Not as a speaker, for you well know I am but little given to join in any conversation; wishing rather always to hear than be heard, only for the pleasure of listening to those speeches which will be delivered on both sides of the question on so singular an event, by some of the most sensible and learned personages in this Kingdom, and to give my vote as it shall appear to me most conducive to the public good, for with Mr. [Warren] Hastings and his connection I am entirely unacquainted, neither do I at present recollect any proprietor of India stock that I care one farthing for, except yourself. Hoping therefore we may agree in opinion at the end of the debate, I remain, etc. etc.

Exeter.

Lords Dudley and Harborough belong with Sir Walter Rawlison and Mr. Durand to the illustrious unknown, and I find no letters of theirs to place beside Exeter's.

ous short term of office had made him personally popular with the ministers of foreign powers, and had he been given an opportunity of settling down to the job, he might very well have done more to effect a really constructive foreign policy than any other statesman of his time, since he had imagination, good-will, and, on occasion, salutary firmness; the French minister called him a fagot of thorns. It was a combination of qualities not to be found elsewhere, but it was never given an effective chance. Three times the promise was frustrated, twice by political fortune, once by death. Fox's coalition period was, in the sum, a barren one. He persuaded one or two foreign powers into a friendly mood—Russia and Prussia among them—he concluded a peace that was an unpalatable legacy from his predecessors, and then he was dismissed.

When parliament met for the autumn session in November, 1793, Pitt thought to score an easy mark in ridiculing a minister who had come into power by denouncing terms that he now advanced as an achievement. Fox was too quick for him in debating technique, but to himself he had to confess that his redemption of the national fortunes was but a poor showing. It was not his fault, but there it was. When he said that to have repudiated the preliminary articles would have been to sink the national honor, he was speaking the truth, but it was an anemic truth for the comfort of a man so adventurous and full-blooded. In the circumstances, he could have done no better, but he knew passionately how better might be done. Ill-starred is the precise definition of the coalition ministry, which was substantially Fox's ministry.

The king's speech proceeded from its eulogy of the peace to another fateful clause. "The situation of the East India Company will require the utmost exertions

of your wisdom to maintain and improve the valuable advantages derived from our Indian possessions, and to promote and secure the happiness of the native inhabitants of those provinces." The challenge was a dual one, made by the king and Fox; and they did not mean the same thing. Fox announced that Indian affairs were indeed overdue for discussion, and that within a few days he proposed to bring them forward. On November the 18th, began a series of debates, the summary of which covers over a hundred closely printed pages.

The position, according to Fox, was this. The state of the East India Company was on all hands admitted to be deplorable, and careful inquirers, irrespective of party, were agreed that the chief reason was "the disobedience to the orders of the Court of Directors, and the rapacity of the Company's servants in India." Reform was necessary, but it involved the very invidious necessity of also punishing the authors of the mischief. In this, so many personal considerations arose, that any man might well shrink from the task of investigation. As Fox opened in this fashion, his hearers knew that Warren Hastings was his mark: "that great man Mr. Hastings, a man who, by disobeying the orders of his employers, had made himself so great as to be now able to mix in every question of state, and make every measure of government a personal point in which he had a share." The terms inhumanity, false policy, peculation, and brutality had an obvious bearing. Whatever the rights and the wrongs of the case might be, said Fox, the present state of the Company was chaotic, and he proposed to substitute for the existing directorate, a board of seven persons, nominated by parliament, and to function under its supervision. It would deal with territorial rights, judicature, and finance with its subsidiary aspects, bribery and

corruption. Glancing at a personal consideration, he used a memorable phrase: "I shall always consider my own character, my situation, my rank in the country, as at stake on every measure of state which I shall presume to undertake." He proceeded to an examination of Indian accounts that was an amazing testimony to his mastery of vast volumes of detail. I have been curious to submit this array of figures to a distinguished accountant,* and he assures me that on this evidence alone, he would rank Fox highly among financial intelligences in our political history.

Let us take another stray phrase or two from these speeches, that, covering a period of four weeks, showed Charles at his height as a practical orator, lucid, fearless, often inspired. "Necessity is said to be the plea of tyranny—it is also the plea of freedom." "Freedom, according to my conception of it, commences in the safe and sacred possession of a man's property, governed by laws defined and certain, with many personal privileges, natural, civil, and religious, which he cannot surrender without ruin to himself, and of which to be deprived by any other power is despotism." "What is the end of all government? Certainly the happiness of the governed." Fox may have borrowed that, but if so I do not know the source. "It is no violation of right to abolish the authority that is abused." Pitt had made many objections to Fox's measures, Pitt, "the honourable friend who calls a Bill which backs this sinking company with the credit of the state, a confiscation of their property." And in the vein of irony that Charles so easily commanded, "The bill diminishes the influence of the crown, says one; you are wrong, says a second, it increases it; you are both right, says a third, for it both increases and diminishes the in-

* Sir Nicholas Waterhouse.

fluence of the crown." And then again, this time with a familiar allusion, "Our principles are well known, and I would rather perish with them, than prosper with any other." In addition: "Delicacy and reserve are criminal when interests of Englishmen are at hazard." "Pride is the passion of little, dark, intriguing minds." "I ever contended, and I trust I ever shall, that the crown, kept within its proper boundaries, is essential to the practice of government." "I have [too much self-respect] ever to owe anything to secret influence." "The open and broad path of the constitution has uniformly been mine." The constitution generously interpreted in terms of freedom—has any statesman ever approached an ideal polity more nearly than that?

These fragments do no justice to the vehemence, the wealth of illustration, the vision, that informed the great speeches that Fox made on the topic of East India. But even they may indicate the wit, the national ardor, and the wider concepts of humanity, that distinguished his part in a controversy, in which he justly said that he was met by every species of court faction. And if any antagonist still observes that these phrases, and a hundred others like them, sprang from the virtuosity of party politics, he may be left in the enjoyment of his own perceptions.

9

But eloquent pleading of a good cause, and a conformable House of Commons, were not enough. The king had a double-rooted objection to the bills, and he was determined to kill them. He affected to regard them as subversive of crown rights. The argument was a frivolous one, since even under Fox's scheme the control of Indian affairs would rest finally with the secretary of state under

the sanction of the throne. But it was plausible enough to excite the king's jealousy of parliamentary authority. Secondly, and chiefly, the author of the bills was Charles Fox. Charles, with some reason, was blamed by his friends for introducing measures of such fundamental scope before the king had time to recover from his first anger with the coalition.

All through the summer, George III behaved like a petulant but dangerous child. He hampered his ministers by such petty devices as refusing to create peerages on their recommendation, and so depriving them of a principal source of patronage. In meeting them he was civil, but no more. He desired no cordial relations with them; he desired only to be rid of men who were, he believed, fixed on keeping him "a prisoner in his own palace." Fox, with unruffled temper, was careful to fail in no possible mark of deference. This is the kind of letter he wrote to the king: "Mr Fox hopes your Majesty will not think him presumptuous, or improperly intruding upon your Majesty with professions, if he begs leave next humbly to implore your Majesty to believe, that both the Duke of Portland and he have nothing so much at heart as to conduct your Majesty's affairs, both with respect to measures and to persons, in the manner that may give your Majesty the most satisfaction, and that whenever your Majesty will be graciously pleased to condescend even to hint your inclinations on any subject, that it will be the study of your Majesty's Ministers to show how truly sensible they are of your Majesty's goodness." And this is the kind of letter that the king wrote to Fox, who, in forwarding the final treaties for royal perusal, had asked, very properly, whether the king would desire him to wait on him with any verbal explanations: "The projects of definitive treaties with

France and Spain, and the dispatch which is to accompany them must so fully state the reasons of the alterations of the preliminary articles that I do not mean to call on Mr Fox for further explanation on this subject. Unnecessary discussions are not my taste, and the Cabinet, having by a minute approved of these projects, I do not propose to give myself any additional trouble with regard to them."

On the death of one of the royal children, Fox, in forwarding some dispatches to the king, most humbly begged leave "to take this opportunity of most sincerely condoling with Your Majesty on the late melancholy event, and of assuring Your Majesty of his sensibility upon every occasion that can give concern to your Royal Mind." The king acknowledged the dispatches, but not the condolences.* He nearly achieved his object in June, when the prince's establishment was under discussion. The cordial relations that he knew to exist between his son and Fox threw him into paroxysms of suspicion and resentment. How cordial the relations were may be shown by extracts from the letters any prince wrote at the time to "Dear Charles." In the dating of these notes we see a pale reflex of the king's habit—"¾ past 2 o'clock," "¼ past nine o'clock"—but the minutes are not recorded, nor the prevailing side of the meridian, usually not even the date. "I am waiting for you at your own house; pray come directly if you can, as I wish very much to speak to you. I will not detain you three minutes. Yours most truly, George P." And then, as a postscript: "If you have not got your own carriage you had better take anybody else's." Again: "Allow me to thank you, my dear Charles, for your kind attention to me on this and every other occasion." "I cannot, however, conclude

* Fortescue, VI, 376–77.

without . . . thanking you for the part you have taken in bringing this essential business to me so near a conclusion, which, I assure you, I shall never forget as long as I live." And yet again: "I am most exceedingly sensible of the kind and friendly attention you have shown me throughout the whole of this business, which is of so much importance to my happiness." On June 17, Fox wrote to Northington, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, "There is great reason to think that our Administration will not outlive to-morrow. . . . The immediate cause of the quarrel is the Prince of Wales's establishment." On the same day, Lord Mulgrave wrote to Sandwich:* "Having heard to-day from I believe very good authority, communicated to me in confidence, that the present Administration is at an end, or will be so in a day or two . . . and as I think you will wish to have the earliest intelligence, and perhaps be on the spot at the time, I send my servant with this. . . . It is unnecessary to enter in further particulars of a confidential conversation, of which I will only say that it convinces me all is over with these people."

Two causes contributed to the escape of the ministry on this occasion. First, the king decided at the last moment that to dismiss a government on so personal a question might create a bad impression; and secondly, the prince offered to accept any compromise that his friends thought advisable: "After what has already passed, I did not require this additional proof of your friendship and attachment," he wrote to Fox on June 18; "and you will see by a letter I have this instant written to the Duke of Portland, how ready I am to take your advice, and that I leave it entirely to the Cabinet." On the 19th, Fox wrote to Northington: "There is reason

* Hinchingbrooke MSS.

to think that the storm is for the present dissipated. . . . The Prince has behaved in the handsomest manner, and his reasonableness under the hardest usage, is likely to keep everything quiet." And a month later, to the same correspondent, he adds further evidence of the feelings that were cementing a friendship that the prince to the end of his life remembered with genuine emotion: "I shall always therefore consider the Prince's having yielded, a most fortunate event, and shall always feel myself proportionately obliged to him and to those who advised him." Chief among whom was Charles himself: "Charles Fox went to the Prince and prevailed on him to submit himself entirely to his father, which, at last, he did." *

10

But the King's opportunity was not to be long deferred. As the East India debates proceeded, he saw that he could do nothing with the Commons, but he worked his influence in the Lords with tireless vigilance. He let it be known that any peer who voted with the government when the final decision came, would forfeit all claim to royal favor. On December 17, with the Commons still firm for the ministry, the East India measures were thrown out in the Lords by 95 votes to 76. In the heat of disappointment, Charles wrote: "I am too much hurried to write to you an account of our misfortune. We are beat in the House of Lords by such treachery on the part of the King, and such meanness on the part of his *friends* . . . as one could not expect either from him or them. . . . We are not yet out, but I suppose we shall be tomorrow." Whether defeat in the Lords, against a great Commons majority, justified the dismissal of ministers,

* Walpole.

may be questioned. But the king had no concern for such niceties. He had a constitutional right, and took it without a moment's hesitation. At midnight North and Fox received orders to deliver up their seals. It is said to have been nearly one in the morning before the king's messenger knocked at North's bedroom door, desiring to see him on urgent business. "Then, sir," said North, "you must see Lady North too." The royal displeasure was marked by no touch of chivalry; it even violated the common decencies of practice. The fallen ministers were told to send the seals by their under-secretaries, as a personal interview would be disagreeable to his Majesty. Fox was not honored even with so direct a communication, North being ordered to acquaint his colleague with the king's pleasure. Charles was within a few days of his thirty-fifth birthday. He was not to come into office again until 1806, when he was a dying man.

CHAPTER XI

Opposition Again. Fox and Pitt. Mrs. Fitzherbert Warren Hastings

1783–1788

I

ON DECEMBER 18, 1783, THE DUKE OF PORTLAND WROTE to Lord Sandwich: "I immediately succeeded Mr. Pitt [in the king's presence] who had held an audience of near an hour and a half of His Majesty, and who, by the composure and serenity in which I found the King, had, as I conclude, agreed to accept. When I came to the House of Lords, I found it there strongly reported that the new arrangement and dissolution were immediately to take place." * The next day William Pitt had become prime minister at the age of twenty-four; but parliament was not dissolved until March 25, 1784. On the defeat of his India bill, Fox wrote: "However, we are so strong, that nobody can undertake, without madness; and, if they do, I think we shall destroy them almost as soon as they are formed." He was reckoning without the parliamentary genius of the young rival whose name was to distinguish the coming political age with his own as that of Fox and Pitt. For three months the two leaders fenced on a question of constitutional order, and day by day Pitt turned Fox's position to his own advantage. The defeated ministers denied the king's right to dissolve parliament in the middle of a session, hoping by this maneuver to reduce their successors to impotence by constant defeat in the Commons.

* Hinchingbrooke MSS.

Pitt accepted the situation, and steadily set himself to a sustained attack upon the old coalition majority. Fox and his misbegotten party had aimed at control of the immense resources of India for the purpose of establishing their own power; they had sought to undermine the prerogative of the crown; and now they were afraid of going to the country with a plain issue, preferring to plead a doubtful point of procedure for the purpose of frustrating the king's duly accredited ministers. The arguments were vulnerable, but effective. Pitt knew perfectly well that the Indian reforms proposed by Fox and Burke were soundly conceived; in substance he followed them himself in his own later policy; and the trial of Warren Hastings, though it ended in the acquittal of the defendant, showed beyond dispute how necessary they were. But the charge that Fox had tried to manipulate Indian government for the purposes of party, false as it was, was a difficult one to disprove, and Pitt's cool perseverance began to affect opinion. In the same way, when Samuel Johnson said, "There was a doubt whether the nation should be ruled by the sceptre of George the Third or the tongue of Fox," he knew, as Pitt did, that there was no such doubt at all; though as early as July 13, 1782, the king himself had with no less absurdity written to Jenkinson: "The mask is now certainly cast off it is no less than a struggle whether I am to be dictated to by Mr. Fox, who avows that He must have the sole direction of this Country." * But, again, while the real issue was whether the representatives of the people should control or be controlled by an arbitrary monarch, Pitt, giving Johnson's version of the case, played on popular fears for security. And, finally, while Fox was justified in presenting his views on dissolution, his public prestige, al-

* Fortescue, VI, 85.

ready a little tarnished by the junction with North, was further impaired by daily insinuations that he was clinging to power by slightly disreputable tactics. The situation was one of almost tragic futility. There was at this time no real difference in the political views and hopes of two men who might so splendidly have shared and brightened each other's luster. But there was a rapidly hardening difference of temperament, and it betrayed them both into forcing an antagonism in respect of issues on which they were essentially in agreement.

The spring session of 1784 resolved itself into a contest of wits between rivals for power, and Pitt won. He did not score all the points; in debate he was not yet, nor was he ever to be, Fox's master. At first the general feeling was reflected in Gibbon's exclamation: "Depend upon it, Billy's painted galley must soon sink under Charles's black collier." But the majority began to dwindle. On January 12, Fox could carry a resolution by 196 votes to 54; on the 23rd Pitt lost his East India bill only by eight, but on that occasion his own proposals too closely resembled those for which the House had voted under Fox, to make the trial representative, and on February 2, a majority of nineteen voted against "the continuance of the present Ministers." On the 18th, Fox, on a motion to postpone supplies, was successful by twelve in a House of over four hundred. On the 20th his majority rose to twenty on what amounted to a further vote of censure on the government, on March 1 it fell again to twelve, and on the 5th to nine. Three days later, Fox moved for "a representation to the King on the State of Public Affairs," and one vote only decided the division in his favor. Pitt had destroyed the opposition's claim to a compact majority, and advised the king to dissolve parliament and send his ministers to the country. In the election that fol-

lowed, Fox's party was overwhelmed. When the new House met, Pitt carried his first measure by 271 votes to 60, and could rely on maintaining the margin. Charles was back in the familiar valleys of defeat, and the king no longer had reason to complain that he wished he were "eighty, or ninety, or dead."

2

The struggle was embittered by fierce party animosity. In February, as Pitt was returning from a city dinner, where he had been acclaimed as the savior of the nation, his coach was attacked by a body of men armed with bludgeons, and the minister escaped serious damage only by taking refuge in White's Club in St. James's Street. For unhappily the assault had taken place just outside Brooks's, and it was more than hinted that the assailants were on the members' list of that Whig stronghold. Fox himself was mentioned. The accusation was never supported by a particle of evidence, and it is not necessary to defend Charles on a charge of having behaved as a common ruffian. But his own answer, when taxed with having had a share in the outrage, was characteristic, if not wholly delicate; he was, he said, in bed at the time with his mistress, Mrs. Armistead, who "was prepared to substantiate the fact on oath." As we shall see, Mrs. Armistead was to become Mrs. Fox, in a marriage of deep and charming affection. But the scandal occasioned by Pitt's misadventure, absurd as it was in its reflections on Fox, was symptomatic of dangerously high feeling between the great rivals. Pitt was shortly to show that generosity in combat was not one of his conspicuous merits.

Charles, after a prolonged contest, was again returned

for Westminster. He has left his own record of the daily voting. On April 5, he writes: "The thing is far from over, and I have still hopes; but their beating me two days following, looks ugly." On the 7th, "Worse and worse, but I am afraid I must not give it up." On the 8th, "I have serious thoughts, if I am beaten here, of not coming into Parliament at all." On the 9th, "We certainly have a chance, but a small one," but on the 20th, "I have gained thirty-two to-day, so that we are all in spirits again." On the 27th, he gained forty-two on his opponent, and was then twenty ahead; on the 28th, he gained a further twenty, on the 29th, fifteen, on the 30th, thirty, with subsequent additions.

The campaign was enlivened by the appearance of the lovely Duchess of Devonshire as Charles's champion. In the early days of the polling, the casting of the metropolitan votes had left him well in arrears, and his friends, whose headquarters were now to be found at Carlton House, newly tenanted by the Prince of Wales, hastily sought a means of enlisting the electors from outlying hamlets in his interest. The duchess undertook this enterprise, and very thoroughly she carried out her task. "Neither entreaties nor promises were spared. In some instances even personal caresses were said to have been permitted, in order to prevail on the surly or inflexible; and there can be no doubt of common mechanics having been conveyed to the hustings by the Duchess, in her own coach." * Georgiana worked all day long and every day, utterly careless of her rank, and lavish of her attractions. Dressed in a scarlet habit, with a cap made of a fox's skin, and the brush hanging down her back, "she was in the most blackguard houses in Long Acre by eight o'clock this morning." At first her efforts seemed

* Wraxall, *Posthumous Memoirs of His Own Time.*

MRS. ARMISTEAD
(Elizabeth Bridget Fox)
From the portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds

to be making no decided impression. "Westminster goes on well," wrote Pitt with more wit than gallantry, "in spite of the Duchess of Devonshire and the other women of the people." But Fox's figures mounted, and the government took fright. Their agents flooded the borough with filthy lampoons and filthier libels. Fox later spoke in the House of the "injustice, indecency, and irreverence: the gross, the frontless prostitution of names too sacred to be named," that were used in the attempt to defeat him. Also, the government introduced a siren of their own into the field, but Lady Salisbury had neither the beauty nor the accommodating amiability of the duchess. She very decidedly would not kiss a butcher for a vote. By the middle of May, Westminster was not going on at all well for Pitt, himself handsomely returned for the University of Cambridge. Indeed, Fox was in by a majority of 236.*

Pitt took it badly. The victories that everywhere strengthened his cause, were unsweetened by the defeat of the man whom he most feared; the man, it may be added, to whom he most owed, in the hour of victory, the honorable consideration due to greatness in misfortune. But Pitt already in his youth had a somewhat wintry mind, given to grudging humors.

Charles, on his election, was chaired by an immense procession graced by the coaches of the duchesses of Portland and Devonshire. The Prince of Wales's Feathers borne before him, he was carried in triumph to Devonshire House, where the prince, surrounded by the Whig nobility, received him on a scaffolding built and embellished for the occasion. At night his Royal Highness appeared at dinner wearing Fox's colors, the buff

* The final figures were: Lord Hood, 6,694; Mr. Fox, 6,234; Sir Cecil Wray, 5,998.

and blue made so familiar by Gillray and his fellow cartoonists, and the next day, at Carlton House, gave a complimentary breakfast that lasted from noon until six in the evening. During the day the king drove in state down St. James's Park on his way to open the new parliament, and as he passed the wall of Carlton Gardens the sound of rebel revelry from the lawn beyond fell on his ears. At night, a dinner given by Mrs. (afterwards Lady) Crewe, was attended by the prince, who in Fox's honor gave the toast "True Blue and Mrs. Crewe." But the hero was a tired and disappointed man. He had won Westminster, but had decisively lost the country.

The cup was bitter, but it was still not full enough for Pitt's liking. The minister's ample majority was not sufficient; he had believed that his victims would not be merely Fox's party, but Fox himself. Provoked by the failure of his hopes, he instigated, or at least lent himself to, an expedient as paltry as it was senseless. On the declaration of the poll, it was the high bailiff's plain duty to announce Hood and Fox as duly elected members. Instead, he ordered a scrutiny. The figures gave no indication that it could reverse the verdict. But the process was likely to be a tedious one, and in the meantime Fox would be kept from his rightful place. To meet the emergency, he was returned for Orkney, and thus enabled to sit at the opening of the new parliament. A member moved that the high bailiff be ordered forthwith to make return of the elected members. In the following debate, Charles, after exploring the legal position with his usual comprehension, challenged Pitt in unequivocal terms:

"Let him take care that when they see all the powers of his administration employed to overwhelm an individual, men's eyes may not open sooner than they would if he conducted himself within decent bounds of discre-

tion. . . . But if the right honourable gentleman forgets his duty, I shall not neglect mine. Though he may exert all the influence of his situation to harass and persecute, he shall find that we are incapable of unbecoming submissions. There is a principle of resistance in mankind which will not brook such injuries. . . . But let the question terminate as it may, I feel myself bound to maintain an unbroken spirit through such complicated difficulties; and I have this reflection to solace me, that this unexampled injustice could never have succeeded, but by the most dangerous and desperate exertions of a government, which, rather than not wound the object of their enmity, scrupled not to break down all the barriers of law, to run counter to the known customs of our ancestors . . . and to strike a deep blow [at] the English constitution, without any other inducement . . . except the malignant wish of gratifying an inordinate and implacable spirit of resentment."

Pitt's reply was shameful. In a speech that spoke of Fox as "an apostate" and as "a candidate whose conduct and principles had rendered him detestable to the public," he urged the House to reject the motion, which it did by a large majority. This was on June 8, 1784. At prodigal cost the scrutiny proceeded, and six months later the high bailiff was called to the bar of the House to report progress. It was then divulged that only a fourth part of the electors had been examined, that Fox had lost 105 votes and gained 80, and that to complete the scrutiny at least another two years would be necessary. At length the House wearied of this nonsense, and in March, 1785, the motion for an immediate return was carried, and Pitt, resisting to the last, suffered his first ministerial defeat on an issue in which his part had been wholly discreditable. Wraxall supplies a striking commentary: "It

was determined, at whatever risk or price, to prevent Fox from taking his seat for the city that had elected him, and to render every other public object subservient to his exclusion. All the little passions of human nature were called into action, in order to oppress a formidable and illustrious individual. I am sensible that in passing this censure on Mr. Pitt's conduct, I condemn myself, since I supported and voted with him on every question relative to the Westminster election: but, in writing these memoirs, I acknowledge no guide but truth." On March 5, following the adverse vote, the government gave way, and Fox took his seat once again as member for Westminster.

3

Apart from his early association with the Tories, Charles had now twice been in office, and twice he had failed to establish himself. Another man in his position might have turned the opportunities to greater advantage by trimming. But on fundamental principle this was a course of which he was incapable. The crown influence was, in his view, an obstacle not to be evaded, but to be removed. Until that was done, it was impossible for him to give his mind to the settled routine of constructive measures. And the obstacle was too much for him. His work in opposition did, indeed, create a political mood that was already beginning to curb the pretensions of the king, but the process was to be a slow one, and Fox himself was never to enjoy the satisfaction of seeing George III capitulate. His failure in office was an inevitable failure of circumstance and of his own impulsive temper. From 1782 to 1793, he was in opposition to a minister who managed the king with a discretion that he himself would have disdained to employ, a minister who nevertheless was as determined as himself to tolerate no improper

interference from the crown. Pitt here achieved by diplomacy much that Fox could not by open attack. Court faction was obnoxious to both men, but while the king was deftly persuaded to regard Pitt as a friend, his blunt mind had no reason to regard Fox as anything but his most formidable enemy. Pitt's was the more astute method, but Fox hardly forfeits admiration in consequence. The pity remains that events should have thus thrown the two men into conflict. Pitt's domestic policy from 1784 to 1793 was in most respects perfectly fitted for Fox's collaboration, while his foreign policy would have derived nothing but benefit from the direction of one who had a more enlightened understanding of European affairs than any other man in the country. Instead of being placed in authority with a mind equal and complementary to his own, Fox was forced into an opposition often fictitious and always unsatisfactory.

Not that Charles could ever be dispirited. There was still much that he could do in keeping his unalterable principles before the House, and he faithfully did it. They were principles beyond the scope of Pitt's more calculating patriotism, principles, as we have seen, that were prophetic of a then unrealized liberalism. Moreover, Charles had too many intellectual and social resources ever to suffer the disillusions of the cynic. He was still on occasion the particular distinction of Brooks's, but more and more he was drawn to the seclusion of his country house and the serener moods of life and letters. If we lament the years that were lost to his leadership, we may still allow that they were years profoundly influenced by the ideals that he never failed to advocate, ideals far richer in promise for the future than was known by his age. And, while he was never out of power by choice, necessity left him with an ampler leisure that discloses a domestic life of high and simple beauty.

A few episodes of memorable interest in Fox's life may be taken in rapid survey from the political activities that now for some years settled down to a routine such as has been indicated above. In April, 1785, he again supported Pitt in a measure for parliamentary reform that was again defeated by an emphatic majority. In the same year he vehemently and successfully opposed the minister's Irish trade policy, and was fêted in consequence by the Manchester merchants who, like Fox himself, could in those days see no good in Pitt's free trade proposals. "Our reception in Manchester," wrote Charles, "was the finest thing imaginable, and handsome in all respects. All the principal people came out to meet us, and attended us into town, with blue and buff cockades." The whiff of returning popularity was very grateful to a man who had lately encountered little but odium outside the circles of Carlton House.*

It was in 1785, too, that Fox's intimacy with the prince involved him in the affair of Mrs. Fitzherbert. This lady, whose maiden name was Mary (or Maria) Anne Smythe, was twenty-nine years old at the time, the prince twenty-three. She had been twice married and widowed. Her

*The objections to Pitt's Irish proposals, elaborated at great length in the debate, may be summarized under two heads. The Irish patriot party opposed measures that they conceived would subject their own parliament to English legislation. Manchester and other great commercial centers in England saw the ruin of their prosperity in the proposed free traffic. On the whole, the probability is that Pitt's financial genius was wiser than they, but that was the situation that forced him to withdraw his bill. Among the Hinchingbrooke papers is a letter from Portland to Sandwich, dated August 19, 1785, less than a week after Grattan had killed the government plan in the Irish House of Commons, that throws a curious light on political temper at the time. "I have the satisfaction of acquainting your Lordship that the ministerial system of commercial intercourse between this country and Ireland is completely annihilated. Mr. Orde [secretary to the Duke of Rutland, lord lieutenant] abandoned it on Monday last in the House of Commons of that Kingdom, and assured them that he would not revive it in this session, nor till it was called for by the general voice of the people of Ireland."

first husband, a Dorset squire by name Edward Weld, died in the year of their marriage before she was twenty; her second, Thomas Fitzherbert, of Swynnerton in the county of Stafford, whom she married when she was twenty-two, died in 1781. She was left with a fortune of two thousand a year, was generally allowed to be accomplished and attractive, and was a member of the Roman Catholic church. Her virtue has been much remarked, and there is no evidence that it was anything but exemplary; but in getting herself into a position of most ingenious difficulty with a young man six years her junior, she could scarcely plead inexperience. On her second widowhood she went to live at Richmond, and there in 1784 formed the acquaintance of the prince. His infatuation was immediate, but his solicitations unavailing. The lady refused to live with him as a mistress, and she could contract no legal marriage with the heir to the throne. Inflamed by the resistance, the prince's passion took an extravagant turn. Mrs. Fitzherbert has left her own account of an incident that has all the graces of invention:

Keate, the surgeon, Lord Onslow, Lord Southampton, and Mr Edward Bouverie, arrived at her house in the utmost consternation, informing her that the life of the Prince was in imminent danger—that he had stabbed himself—and that only her immediate presence could save him. She resisted, in the most peremptory manner, all their importunities, saying that nothing should induce her to enter Carlton House. She was afterwards brought to share in the alarm, but still, fearful of some stratagem derogatory to her reputation, insisted upon some lady of high character accompanying her, as an indispensable condition; the Duchess of Devonshire was selected. They four drove from Park Street to Devonshire House, and took her along with them. She found the Prince pale, and covered with blood. The sight so overpowered her faculties, that she was deprived of almost all consciousness. The Prince told her, that nothing would induce him to live unless

she promised to become his wife, and permitted him to put a ring round her finger. I believe a ring from the hand of the Duchess of Devonshire was used upon the occasion, and not one of his own. Mrs Fitzherbert being asked by me, whether she did not believe that some trick had been practised, and that it was not really the blood of His Royal Highness, answered in the negative, and said she has frequently seen the scar. . . . They returned to Devonshire House. A deposition was drawn up of what had occurred.*

The next day she left the country with a protest that she had not been a free agent in what had taken place.

The prince thereupon fell into further depths of quite genuine distress. Constant relays of couriers pursued the lady to the Continent, and when official representations were made to her suitor that it was time that he should marry for state reasons, he flatly declined to discuss the matter. Among his confidants were Fox and Mrs. Armistead, who were now very happily established at St. Anne's Hill, near Chertsey in Surrey. Mrs. Armistead told Lord Holland that here the prince would come to "weep by the hour, testifying the sincerity and violence of his passions by the most extravagant expressions and action; rolling on the floor, striking his forehead, tearing his hair, falling into hysterics, and swearing that he would abandon the country, forego the crown, sell his jewels and plate, and scrape together a competence to fly with the object of his affections to America." The sympathetic friends at St. Anne's Hill did not take the threat seriously; even though the popular fancy is said to have lent it the color of—

> I would crowns resign to call her mine,
> Sweet Lass of Richmond Hill.

* Mrs. Fitzherbert's account, as dictated to Lord Stourton. Hon. Charles Langdale, *Memoirs of Mrs. Fitzherbert,* 1856.

But when it was announced in December, 1785, that Mrs. Fitzherbert had returned to England, the news was accompanied by a report that made these scenes an extremely alarming recollection. On the tenth of that month, Charles wrote a remarkable letter to the prince. After respectful professions of attachment and duty, he proceeds: "I was told just before I left town yesterday, that Mrs Fitzherbert was arrived, and if I had heard only this, I should have felt most unfeigned joy at an event which I knew would contribute so much to your Royal Highness's satisfaction; but I was told at the same time, that from a variety of circumstances . . . there was reason to suppose that you were going to take the very desperate step (pardon the expression) of marrying her at this moment. If such an idea be really in your mind, and it is not too late, for God's sake let me call your attention to some considerations"—which considerations he sets forth at great length and with uncompromising force.

Mrs. Fitzherbert herself is, says Charles, "a person with whom I have scarcely the honour of being acquainted, but I hear from everybody that her character is irreproachable, and her manners most amiable." The dilemma is very subtly complicated. Marriage of the heir to the throne before the age of twenty-five or without sanction of parliament, so the letter continues, is illegal. On the other hand, by marriage with a Catholic the heir is thrown out of succession to the crown. Having examined the case in all its aspects, all its dangers to the prince, to Mrs. Fitzherbert herself, and to their possible children, Charles refers to what might be—but what in fact was not—a possibility of Mrs. Fitzherbert's conversion at a later date, when the prince could marry legally and must judge for himself; and concludes with the following words: "In the meanwhile a mock marriage (for it can be

no other) is neither honourable for either of the parties, nor, with respect to your Royal Highness, even safe. This appears so clear to me that, if I were Mrs. Fitzherbert's father or brother, I would advise her not by any means to agree to it, and to prefer any other species of connection with you to one leading to so much misery and mischief." This has been very shocking to many people, whose moral transports we need not pause to share.

The prince replied by return:

My dear Charles,

Your letter of last night afforded me more true satisfaction than I can find words to express, and it is an additional proof to me . . . of your regard and affection . . . which it is not only the wish but the ambition of my life to merit. Make yourself easy, my dear friend; believe me the world will now soon be convinced that there not only is, but never was, any ground for these reports which of late have been so explicitly circulated.

That is definite; and ten days later the prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert were privately married in the lady's drawing-room by a minister of the Church of England.

4

The secret was well kept. More than fifteen months later, the question of the prince's debts came before the House of Commons, and a member made veiled references to matters gravely affecting the constitution both in Church and in State. His meaning was not to be mistaken, and a reply was clearly expected. Fox made it in plain terms. That a scandal so palpable could have obtained a moment's currency astonished him, but "when it appears that an invention so monstrous, a report of a fact which has not the smallest degree of foundation, a

report of fact actually impossible to happen, has been circulated with so much industry as to have made an impression on this House, it proves at once the uncommon pains taken by the enemies of His Royal Highness to propagate the grossest and most malignant falsehoods, with a view to deprecate his character and injure him in the opinion of his country." On being further questioned, he repeated that the fact not only never could have happened legally, but never had happened in any way whatsoever, and being then asked whether he had direct authority for this assertion, he replied that he had.

Few words of observation need be added. Fox, beyond any possibility of suspicion, was speaking the truth; that is, he had been given the prince's assurance as he declared. But from that day to the end of Charles's life, Mrs. Fitzherbert refused to acknowledge him. In other words, the prince led her to believe that Fox had spoken in the House without authority. To Charles himself the prince made no word of protest, but he persuaded Sheridan to offer a gratuitous tribute in the House to Mrs. Fitzherbert's virtues, with what object it is not clear. Fox on discovering the truth, which he did within twenty-four hours of his speech, was naturally enraged, to the point, it is said, of refusing for a year to see a prince who nevertheless continued to address him as "My dear Charles" and sign himself in haste with "Adieu, my dear friend."

The complications of the case were prolonged and strange. Mrs. Fitzherbert's connection with the prince underwent numerous vicissitudes until 1803, when the final separation took place. On his marriage to Caroline of Brunswick in 1795, she was, by her conviction that her own union was binding in the sight of her church, whatever it might be by English law, in the embarrassing position of being married to a man who had two duly accred-

ited wives. When the princess was deserted by her husband after a year's infelicity, he made fresh overtures to Maria. In these he was warmly supported by his family, from the king downwards, who had always treated Mrs. Fitzherbert with cordial respect, and considered her to be a desirable influence upon the royal heir. That lady, at a loss to know precisely where or who she was, turned in her perplexity to the papal throne for instruction. Rome advised her that she might return to her presumably bigamous husband with decorum and piety. She did so, to his complete satisfaction until 1803, when the charms and intrigues of Lady Hertford ended a misalliance that had by no means been without its idyllic note. Mrs. Fitzherbert, in a somewhat bleak old age, told her lay confessor that in her happier years she and the prince had been "extremely poor, but as merry as crickets." As though to spoil the story of no embellishment, the prince, when George IV, stoutly repudiated to Mr. Croker "the absurd story of his supposed marriage." There is but one explanation of the whole fantastic business. If George III was an obstinate precisian, his eldest son was a no less obstinate liar, and it is clear that he lied to Fox, to Mrs. Fitzherbert, and to Mr. Croker with a nice impartiality.

5

While we are in the society of this amiable if inaccurate prince, we may consider another episode of his career in which Fox was closely concerned. In 1788, the king suffered his second mental breakdown. Pitt was in the full tide of his ascendency, when suddenly he was faced, by an act of God, with the menace of effacement. If the king were declared to be incapable of government, and a Regency established, there could be no doubt that the

buff and blue would come in with the prince. Towards the end of the year, the king was apprehensive of the returning malady. He complained of disorder in his thoughts, and found himself unable to listen to the music that was so precious to him. There was a lamentable cry one day in the royal apartments at Windsor: "I am going to be mad, and I wish to God that I may die." A little time after, the unfortunate monarch is said to have risen suddenly from the dining table and, seizing his obnoxious heir by the throat, to have pinned him against the wall in a frenzy of reproach. The prince must have been provoking enough as a son, even to sanity, but it was insanity that the court recognized in the symptoms. At the end of October the king's behavior at a levee gave alarming indications of the truth, and although every effort was made to keep the public in ignorance, the world began to whisper that the king was mad again. On November 10, Captain John Payne, the prince's secretary, apologized to Sandwich for a delay in writing, as "the very precarious situation of affairs in this place [Windsor] made me unwilling to create any useless alarms till His Majesty's disorder seemed to take some decisive appearance. I am sorry to add that the one it has taken is of the most unhappy kind. No lucid interval has appeared ever since he was first seized, and to-day our last hope is removed with the fever. His pulse is quiet, and at times his ravings subside into great calmness, but always increase in incoherency, and his general health is declining." *

Early in December the king was declared by the phy-

* Hinchingbrooke MSS. "Jack Payne," who flattered his master's example concerning the king, was, we may suspect, overstating his solicitude. Venturing on one occasion to speak disrespectfully of the queen in the presence of the Duchess of Gordon, he was pulled up by her Grace with "You little, insignificant, good-for-nothing, upstart, pert, chattering puppy, how dare you name your royal master's royal mother in that style?"

sicians to be incapable of government. But an immediate complication arose. The doctors disagreed as to the probable duration of the collapse, and while one held out no hope of early recovery, others with equal authority held far less gloomy views. They even hinted that so short a period as six weeks might see the trouble through. A political crisis was at once precipitated. Fox was in Italy at the moment, and Burke wrote to him there, urging his immediate return: "God bless you. There is a good deal to be done for your security and credit, supposing the prince's dispositions to you to be all they are represented, and that I believe them to be. Your business formerly was only to take care of your own honour. I hope you have now another trust. It is a great deal that the proscription is taken off; but, at the same time, the effects of twenty-eight years [Burke is miscalculating] of systematic endeavours to destroy you, cannot be done away with ease. You are to act a great, and though not a discouraging, a difficult part; and in a scene which is wholly new. If you cannot succeed in it, the thing is desperate."

Charles reached England on November 24. The prince's party, led by Fox, were for an immediate and unlimited Regency in favor of the heir apparent. Pitt, playing for time, instituted an elaborate search for precedents. He appointed a committee, he evolved tedious ingenuities of debate in the House, he protested with horror against the indecency of haste on so mournful an occasion. In vain Fox retorted that the plain facts of the case required no precedent, and that the indecency of a haste to provide the country with an executive was a ministerial fiction. Pitt was gaining his point, which was time. On December 15, Fox wrote: "I think it certain that in about a fortnight we shall come in. If we carry our questions

[on the form of the proposed Regency Act] we shall come in in a more creditable and triumphant way, but at any rate the Prince must be Regent, and of consequence the Ministry must be changed. The manner in which the Prince has behaved through the whole, has been the most steady, the most friendly, and the handsomest that can be conceived. . . . The King himself (notwithstanding the reports which you may hear) is certainly worse, and perfectly mad." The middle of February, 1789, however, found Pitt still successfully engaged in obstruction, and on the 17th Fox was writing to Fitzpatrick: "I hope by this time all ideas of the Prince or any of us taking any measure in consequence of the good reports of the King are at an end; if they are not, pray do all you can to crush them." Hope deferred was still high, and he adds: "I leave this place [Bath, where he was taking a cure] on Thursday, but stay for letters, and therefore if you could let me know by the return of post, on what day the Regency is like to commence, I should be obliged to you."

But the king was once again to destroy Charles's prospects. On the 19th, Pitt wrote to his mother: "You will have seen for some days how constantly the news from Kew has been improving. . . . [The king] is to all appearance perfectly well, and if it were the case of a private man, would be immediately declared so . . . the plan of the Regency must probably be altered . . . or perhaps wholly laid aside." On the same day the chancellor in the House of Lords announced the king's convalescence, and, five days later, his complete recovery. On March 5 parliament was told that it would be informed of his Majesty's pleasure on the 10th, and the visions of a Regency government under Fox were at an end.

6

The charges against Warren Hastings, initiated as we have seen by Fox in his India speeches of 1783, were again brought before the House in 1786, and in 1788 culminated in impeachment. The principal agent in the proceedings was Burke, who for five years had been preparing his case against a man whom he regarded as a criminal reproach to the English name. The trial lasted a hundred and forty-five days, but extended over a period of seven years, and it was not until 1795 that Hastings was acquitted, a ruined man with little but a verdict by way of fortune or reputation. On the motion for impeachment, passed by the House in 1786, Fox took a decisive tone, in which he was supported, less decisively, by Pitt. On the general principles of the case, it was impossible that Fox could have any but one view, and he stated it clearly: "A noble lord has most sagaciously asked, what, in such a situation, is a governor of India to do; is he to consult Pufendorff and Grotius? No. But I will tell him what he is to consult—the laws of nature—not of the statutes to be found in . . . books, but those laws which are to be found in Europe, Africa, and Asia—that are found amongst all mankind—those principles of equity and humanity implanted in our hearts." It has always been, and will remain, a matter for skepticism to many that there are public men who really do believe that kind of thing; but Fox believed it, every word of it and always. He began to believe it when as a youth he left the king and North, and he went on believing it without a moment's misgiving until in 1806 he died, not an old but a greatly experienced and still far from disillusioned man.

The charge lay in abeyance till 1787, when Sheridan

joined Burke in leading the prosecution, and on February 7 delivered his classic oration on the Begums of Oude. He spoke for five hours and forty minutes, and on concluding collapsed into Burke's arms amidst a tumult of cheering and applause. A parliamentary career that had hitherto been somewhat disappointing, suddenly achieved a brilliant, if not sustained, triumph. The intellectual agility, the control of argument and antithesis, and the illuminating wit that inform the speech, are qualities that have so splendidly enriched English comedy. But as we read today the crowning periods so artfully deployed, we sometimes seem to detect a flaw in that ringing rhetoric.

The use of one great man as whipping-post for another is a poor business, but a comparison here obtrudes itself. Fox and Sheridan were for many years political friends; in the cartoons of the indefatigable Gillray—whose spirited obscenities become a little tiresome in reiteration—they are inseparable. In Fox's last ministry Sheridan was treasurer of the navy. Also they were often boon companions in exploits that have furnished the history of the time with many familiar and scandalous footnotes, the significance of which we have discussed. And yet Fox never seems to have had any deep bond of natural sympathy with the man whose talents he so greatly admired.

The explanation is, I think, that while Fox, self-indulgent as he may have been, had a character sufficiently tough to survive excesses unimpaired, Sheridan drank himself steadily into a real deterioration. "Fox," says Wraxall, speaking from personal knowledge, "outlived his vices; those of Sheridan accompanied him to the tomb." No one could be less capable than Fox of moral indignations in such matters, as it may be said no man

had less right to affect them. But the distinction implies a deeper difference of character than is apparent in fugitive humors. Both men were no doubt fallible enough in their private affairs, and it means nothing that one drank more or less than the other. But Sheridan became the victim of habits that Charles survived. The deeper, simpler, more responsible nature could bear a strain that was too heavy for the weaker, more unstable genius. Antipathy in such cases is hardly conscious; but it exists. The last man in the world to sit in judgment on the private life of Sheridan or of anyone else, Fox had somewhere hidden in his mind a spark of disdain for a man, friend as he was, who could not stay the course. The emotion had nothing to do with his amiability, which was imperturbable; it was merely a condition of nature such as none of us can determine, however firmly we may keep it in control. In Sheridan's memorable speech there is, we may fancy, just an undertone of something meretricious, something that belonged to a world in which Fox could not breathe.

But, however this may be, the effect of the speech on its hearers was phenomenal. Fox himself declared with enthusiasm that "all he had ever heard, all he had ever read, when compared with it, dwindled into nothing." Fifteen years later, when asked by his nephew which was the best speech he had ever heard in the House, he replied on the instant, "Sheridan's on the Begum charge." Burke proclaimed it as "the most astonishing effort of eloquence, argument, and wit united, of which there was any record of tradition," and Pitt confirmed the eulogy by saying that "it surpassed all the eloquence of ancient and modern times." As the trial dragged out its infamous length, Fox took part at intervals in the debates that were an occasional chorus to the

scene in Westminster Hall, but the management remained chiefly with Burke and Sheridan, and we hear little of him in the concluding stages. Now, in 1788, he was aproaching a contest more imperative in its demands than the fortunes of Warren Hastings, grave as these were in their implications. Dark and formidable clouds were settling over France, and in the cataclysmic storm that was about to break, Fox's creed of liberty was to be put to its final and severest trial. In the approaching struggle he had the public support of no more than a little and bitterly misrepresented company. But he was to be fortified by attachments and resources that were widening into the serene and happy middle age that he was not destined to outlive.

CHAPTER XII

St. Anne's Hill. Mrs. Armistead

I

What classic scenes arise on ev'ry side,
  The sage's and the poet's mind to fill!
And yet no bard the tribute hath supplied,
  That truth demands for sainted Anna's Hill.

The variegated landscape to explore,
  Th' historic Muse here loves to take her stand;
And points, applauding Britain's chiefs of yore,
  To Thames's green margent her recording hand.

SO WROTE THE REVEREND PETER CUNNINGHAM IN "Saint Anne's Hill; A Poem," "respectfully and gratefully inscribed by the Obliged Author" to Charles James Fox on his fifty-first birthday, January 24, 1800. It speaks highly of Charles's public merits and private virtues, but it is not much of a poem. Nothing, however, could be surer of pleasing its recipient than praise of St. Anne's Hill, the home that for over twenty years was the happiest circumstance of Fox's life. Situated at Chertsey, some two miles south of the Thames below Staines, it still commands an unspoilt view of the Surrey plains and woodlands, and the garden, that so often touched his correspondence with an idyllic note, is as peacefully secluded as it was when he wandered about it in his green baize apron with pruning scissors in his hand. Later tenants have enlarged the house, somewhat pretentiously, but in the cuts to the parson's poem it is a gracious little villa

with a trellised veranda, and embellished with the trimly designed caprice of the landscape gardener.

Fox was living here by 1783, and either then or shortly afterwards he was joined by Mrs. Armistead. According to Brayley's "History of Surrey" the place was, in fact, her property, and had been since 1778, the same authority asserting that she took Fox there. It may well have been so. This lady's earlier life is obscure to history, though it was by no means obscure in itself. Born in 1751, she was two years younger than Fox. Her name is spelt variously Armistead, Armstead, and Armitstead, but although the editors of Lady Sarah Lennox's "Life and Letters" refer to her as the "widow of Mr. Armistead," there seems to be no evidence that such a gentleman ever existed. When she married Fox in 1795, she signed the register "Elizabeth B. Cane," which name has sometimes been misread as "Blane." She is said to have been the daughter of a Methodist shoemaker, but as a young woman she appears to have put Methodism firmly aside. Disconcerting as it may be to morality, the fact is that "Bet Armistead," who when she was a little over thirty settled down to a life of charming and blameless domesticity with Fox, to whom she brought the most devoted care and a highly intelligent companionship, spent several years in openly promiscuous amours. By 1773, she was a familiar figure in the fashionable town, associated with a certain "notorious establishment" in Marlborough Street. According to Lady Mary Coke, she at this time succeeded Nancy Parsons as the mistress of John Frederick Sackville, third Duke of Dorset, with whom she lived for three years. On June 27, 1778, James Hare wrote to George Selwyn: "Derby is gone into camp near Winchester, and has built a kitchen and a stable for twelve horses, while Lady Derby is living away at Brighthelms-

ton. He does not, however, think his establishment complete without a declared mistress, and he is therefore to take Mrs. Armstead from Lord George." The Countess of Derby, it may be added, had recently run away with Dorset, and to make the action duly symmetrical we may surmise that the Lord George was Lord George Germain, who was Dorset's uncle. How long the Derby affair lasted we do not know, but by 1782 Elizabeth was on terms of intimacy with the Prince of Wales. In August of that year Lady Sarah Napier wrote to Lady Susan, that "the Prince of W—— calls upon Mrs. Armsted every morning," and the heir's new passion was carefully encouraged by his uncle Cumberland. Lord Cholmondeley, a Whig of small eminence, makes a brief entry on this somewhat crowded scene, and then follows the quiet and enduring fidelity of St. Anne's Hill.

2

Elizabeth Fox, as she legally became in 1795, and as she is so rarely called in the records, was a woman of unquestionable beauty. She sat several times for Reynolds, his appointment book mentioning her name in 1772, 1779, 1781, and 1784. The portrait here given is described in the catalogue under the last of these dates as "Looking to right, large black hat, white plumes." It is sufficient evidence of her attractions. She had a tall, elegant figure, and, humble as her origins may have been, a manner notable in an age of fine manners. She is said to have been at one time waiting woman to Mrs. Abington; she may have been more closely associated with the stage. When she came into Fox's life, she was still in the prime of her looks, and she had a mind deficient neither in wit nor in learning. Once she had engaged his

ST. ANNE'S HILL

affection, she was able to hold it and make him happy for the rest of his days. She took charge of his health, his habits, and his leisure, and was repaid by a grateful and unfailing courtesy. If he fell ill, she would take him off to nurse him at Bath; if he was tired, she sheltered him; if he was for an excursion, she was eager company. She could tease him too. She complained that he would not listen to what she said, and when they were married her wedding gift was a seal showing an ear held by a hand. A few references taken, without discrimination of dates, from Charles's letters will serve to show the deeply contented nature of his regard for her:

"Mrs. Armistead and I, and perhaps one or two more, mean to dine at Maidenhead Bridge on Saturday, and to go after dinner on the water to see the boys row up to Surley Hill." That is to his nephew, Henry Fox, "dear young one," as also is this: "Though my fortnight is not near out, Mrs. A. says I must write to you once more before I leave this place." "Here [St. Anne's Hill] am I passing a most comfortable week of holidays, the weather delicious, and the place looking beautiful beyond description, and the nightingales singing, and Mrs. A. as happy as the day is long—all of which circumstances combine to enable me to bear public calamities with wonderful philosophy." And again: "I need not tell you that Mrs. A. is as happy as I am, and she says she only wants to see the young one to make her completely so. God bless you, my dearest Henry." "Soon after I wrote to you last from Thetford, I was called home by a most severe fever which had attacked Mrs. Armistead, but which lasted a very little time, and from which thank God she is perfectly recovered." "I suppose you will not go to Venice again, but if you do, pray see Sig. Gazzaniga, a composer, and give him Mrs. A.'s compliments

and mine, and desire him to send her some new airs, easy and pretty." And, since a note so pleasing cannot weary the reader, we may continue: "I must not let the post of to-day go without telling you how very delighted I am with your verses to Mrs. A. . . . I do not know that the verses, as such, are particularly good, but there is a kindness in them and something altogether that made me feel quite happy when I read them, and indeed you are right, for I believe that if ever there was a place that might be called the seat of true happiness, St. Anne's is that place." And this, after ten years of life together: "Mrs. A. and I had each a letter from you last week, I need not say how much pleasure your letter to her gave me. You were never more right than in what you say of my happiness derived from her, I declare I think my affection for her increases every day. She is a comfort to me in every misfortune, and makes me enjoy doubly every pleasant circumstance of life; there is to me a charm and a delight in her society, which time does not in the least wear off, and for real goodness of heart if she ever had an equal, she certainly never had a superior." "I told you . . . how very much Mrs. A. admires the ring you sent her. She desires me to tell you that the hours here, which always used to be too short, grow shorter than ever, and that we improve in laziness, which however as to me is a false accusation, for, so far from being idle, I hardly have time for anything, though what the time is taken up with is a little difficult to say." And, as a last example: "I am perfectly happy in the country. I have quite resources enough to employ my mind; and the great resource of all, literature, I am fonder of every day; and then the Lady of the Hill is one continual source of happiness to me. I believe few men, indeed, ever were so happy in that respect as I."

In this atmosphere of mutual affection, life at St. Anne's Hill passed without a breath of discord. An abundance of wild oats may have been sown; they had certainly come to a very satisfactory harvest. No explanation is given by Fox or his friends of the reasons why he and Elizabeth waited until ten years of union had passed before they went through the ceremony of marriage. The existence and demise of a possible Mr. Armistead might be the solution after all. Charles had a friend, J. Pery, who was rector of the little parish of Wyton in Huntingdonshire, about two miles out from the county town. To him in September, 1795, Elizabeth went on a visit for the necessary fortnight's residence, and on the 28th of that month the wedding took place as testified by the entry here reproduced from the church register. It has been suggested, by Lord John Russell among others, that Fox kept the event secret, and did not openly acknowledge his wife until he visited France with her in 1802, after the Peace of Amiens. The theory has little to support it, and is highly improbable. A formality that made no difference to the settled habit and conduct of their lives may well have seemed to them of no public importance, and Charles may insensibly have continued to speak of Elizabeth as Mrs. A. But that there was any attempt at concealment when the woman, who for ten years had openly kept house with him and been on cordial terms with his family and friends, became his wife, is not credible.

It is true that in one case at least Elizabeth was never received at a house where Charles was always welcome. The Bedfords, the Spencers, and other great Whig families did not stint their hospitality to a woman who could grace their or any society. But Coke of Norfolk, at Holkham, where Charles was frequently a guest in the

shooting season, had other views. We might wish, perhaps, that Charles had been stiffer about it, and declined the single invitation. But Coke and he were old and close friends, and there seems to have been no ill-will in the matter. Coke made civil inquiries about Mrs. Fox in his correspondence, and sent her presents of game. He had, as we shall see, shown a much more considerable generosity to her husband. But he did not ask her to his house. Had she been mortified, there can be no doubt as to what Charles would have done. It is even likely that if he expressed any misgivings she laughed at him, and told him to go and shoot his partridges in peace. We do not know the circumstances. But if we did, we might still wish that he had found his partridges elsewhere.

3

Further occasional references to Elizabeth Fox will be made, particularly when we come to the closing years of her husband's life. But it will be suitable to insert here certain passages from diaries that she kept in later years. These manuscript diaries are now in the possession of the Hon. and Rev. Edward V. R. Powys, Fox's great-grand-nephew, who has kindly allowed me to make these extracts. The little volumes, covering a period of something like twenty years, for the most part are concerned with the minutiæ of daily life. But they show a vivacious, alert personality, and frequent and delightful touches of character. The references to Fox are rare, but always of the tenderest nature. Lists of books read are included, and have many pleasant echoes of earlier days at St. Anne's Hill. These representative entries are taken from two volumes covering the years 1822–24 and 1827–28. I have thought well to print them in two groups, one (*a*) of a general character, the other (*b*) relating to Charles.

(*a*)

1822 (Aged 71)

Aug. 12. A very fine day. Went to Chertsey in the donkey car.
Aug. 15. [Friends] dined with us on a fine haunch of venison from the Duke of Bedford, which was very good, so was the whole of the dinner.
Nov. 13. [To the play at Drury Lane] did not get back to H[olland] H[ouse] till near one.

1823

Feb. 10. Got to dear home at near five obliged to have four horses the last stage the roads were so heavy.
Feb. 28. A fineish day of the cold sort went out early to look over laundry and the other outbuildings and was sorry to see them all in a dreadful state and in great want of repairs and how I shall ever be able to do anything to them I am sure I know not. Oh that I could recall back a few years. I have been improvident, but alas am now paying very dearly for it, God knows, and I hope will forgive me.
Apr. 23. heard the nightingale for the first time, she was heard in the garden on Friday and so was the cuckoo.
May 12. [Drury Lane] to see Mr Kean in Richard and beautifully he did it.
May 14. I am longing to get to dear home again.
May 23. better, and went to dear home.
May 26. [During another visit] I do long to be at dear home.
May 31. [London] very hot and disagreeable I do long to be at dear home.
June 8. I felt very uncomfortable at parting with dear little Maria it is a foolish thing to allow oneself to love any child that does not belong to one but there is no happiness without having something to love. I left Town at half past eleven . . . and got to dear home before four found all well and dear home looking so beautiful.
Aug. 12. The Thames looked very gay and beautiful about Kingston there was a rowing match and there were a great many pretty boats and smart looking people.
Dec. 22. The play She Stoops to Conquer Tony Lumpkin by Liston which he did pretty well but all the other parts were vilely performed.

1827 (Aged 76)

July 23. [At a fair] I bought a good many pretty things and won a very pretty worked gown in a Raffle of five shillings.

July 30. got to Henley a little before two, had some of the best mutton chops I ever tasted, and some excellent tea afterwards.

Aug. 1. Got to Stratford on Avon by half past twelve—went to see the House that they say Shakespeare was born in it made me feel nervous.

Sept. 13. [To Bedford, lunched at the Swan] and had some of the best champagne I ever tasted I had two glasses!! . . . to the penetentiary to see them work at the treadmill, it did not appear to be very hard work there were only fourteen at work almost all Boys the oldest not more than twenty.

Oct. 20. played two rubbers at whist won them both got home a little before twelve. [The diversion of whist was varied by speculation, cribbage, commerce, and piquet, and December 13, 1822, we read: "played a little with Matilda at Shuttlecock."]

Nov. 4. Went to Church and stayed the communion, which God Almighty make me worthy of.

1828

Feb. 4. [Left Woolbeding, Lord Robert Spencer's place] got to dear home soon after six.

Apr. 14. first asparagus. The nightingale heard [in] the garden, but not by me.

May 24. Got to dear home soon after three—found all well and dear place looking so beautiful.

June 14. to Sandgate to the King's Birds and Beasts the poor Cameleopard looks ill and weak—there were some new animals which I thought ugly.

July 11. my birthday. God of his great goodness make me thankful for all the blessings he is so good to grant me particularly for the health I enjoy and great goodness to me in every way.

(*b*)

1822

Nov. 14. had a pair of horses and went to Town . . . went to several shops and afterwards to Westminster Abbey to see the monument parts of which I like very much I think upon the whole it is beautiful but it is ill placed and rather too low—I could not stop long enough to see it well it made me nervous and there were several people.

1823

May 13. had a good deal of nervous conversation with poor Lady Sarah, and am to have a dreadful time some day soon to look over papers and shall find a great many of my angel's with them, but she says she has no one else that she can trust poor woman so I must do it however heartbreaking.

May 28. L[d] Holland [dear young one] came to talk over the Epitaph for his dearest Uncle and I hope and trust he will be firm and have the name only for I cannot like any of those which have been written for the occasion.

Sept. 28. [Her wedding day.] Alas, what a happy woman I was this day twenty-eight years ago.

1827

July 10. Tucker had some music in the evening being his wedding and my Birth day, which my angel used to say was the happiest day of the year except one.

1828

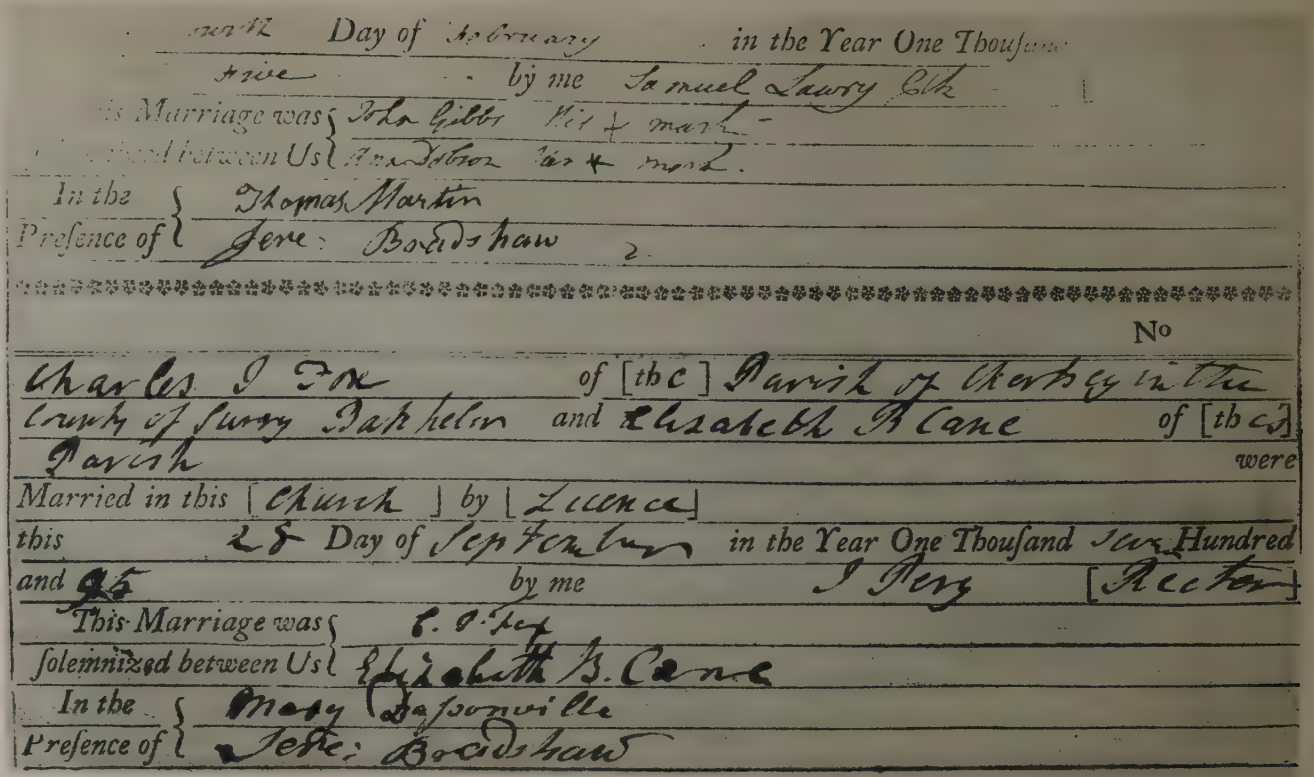
Apr. 6. Mr and Mrs Maule came about half past twelve it was a fine day and the place looked in high beauty and it gave me real pleasure to show it to a friend so sincerely attached to my angel as Mr M. seems to have been and indeed is to his memory.

Apr. 19. I am very glad he got through [his speech in the Lords] so well, it reads beautifully how happy it would have made my angel had it pleased God to have spared him to us, as it was a subject he always looked upon as being most oppressive.

To these passages must be added one of rather greater length. In January, 1824, Mrs. Fox, then aged seventy-four, was at Brighton. On the 18th she writes: "Went to the King's Chapel afterwards took a drive it was not a pleasant day." On the 19th we find the following:

Not at all well Sir W. Keppel called early to say that his Majesty had commanded him to arrange the time and manner for me to go to the pavilion. We went a quarter after eight o'clock and was shown into a very nice room handsomely lighted up with Tea and Coffee things set out. Sir William came soon afterwards and brought . . . the Housekeeper who carried us all around the rooms and very magnificent and beautiful they were when we had seen all but the dining room we returned to the room we first went into and had our Tea. About half past nine Sir William said we could now see the dining room as they were all gone—so there we went and the desert was all left as His M. had left it, it really was a most magnificent sight and quite like a scene in the Arabian Tales. We walked about some time and had some sweetmeats to bring home. Just as I was going to say it was time for us to do so Sir W. said I must leave you for a few minutes which he did but returned almost immediately with the King who came up to me and embraced me in the most kind and friendly way saying he had long wished to see me and that it gave him great pleasure to have that satisfaction in short nothing could exceed the warmth of his manner and professions, he sat down and talked over old times in his former kind way said he should be happy to do anything that I wished and that I had only to make my wishes known through Sir W. Keppel. He sat with us rather better than three quarters of an hour and was really so very kind I was quite overcome, I was glad to see him looking so well rather older than he ought to look for his years but in perfect health. We got home a little before eleven I not at all well, indeed the flurry I had gone through had made me sadly nervous.

Seventy-four, and he was sixty-two. The episode decidedly scores a good mark no less for George IV than for the old lady who had been lovely forty years ago. On the next day, January 20, "Did not sleep well Sir W.



No

Charles J Fox of [the] Parish of Cherbey in the County of Surry Batchelor and Elizabeth B Cane of [the] Parish were Married in this [Church] by [Licence] this 25 Day of Septr in the Year One Thousand Seven Hundred and 95 by me I Perry [Rector]

This Marriage was solemnized between Us { C. J. Fox / Elizabeth B. Cane }

In the Presence of { Mary Dejonville / Jesse Boddshaw }

FACSIMILE OF FOX'S MARRIAGE ENTRY IN WYTON CHURCH REGISTER

Keppel called early to know how I was." And five days later, "Sent to Sir W. Keppel to know how the King was." On the 26th, the inquiry was answered: "the King had got the gout but . . . His Majesty's physicians said it was a healthy gout and that they thought it would not last long." The recollection of this so strange meeting remained vividly as the weeks passed; and on March 1: "got to dear home . . . so very glad to be at dear home again." We are told that it was an immoral age.

And now for some of the books read. In the period 1822–24 we find: "Finished the Fortunes of Nigel—did not like it very much though I dare say it may be very clever—there are some good characters in it." "Gertrude of Wyoming parts of it very pretty." "Napoleon in Exile by Barry E. O'Meara . . . made one ashamed of being an Englishwoman to read the cruel treatment this poor man met with he who once had Europe at his feet to be treated worse than the most common criminal . . . that wretch Sir H. Low will suffer for his conduct some time or other—he is quite a monster." Reading Ramsey's "Life of Washington," she wishes Napoleon had been more like the American. "The Confessions of an English Opium Eater" she found in "parts very good but upon the whole tiresome," and the same judgment is passed on "Quentin Durward." Benvenuto Cellini she took from his Memoirs to be a "strange half mad man though full of talent," and other books on the list are, "A Dissertation on the Gout," "The Martyr of Antioch," "Travels in Canada and the United States," "Life or Fashion and Feeling," "Travels in the Ionian Isles," "Letters from Spain," Moore's "Loves of the Angels," "Bracebridge Hall" ("an amusing book"), Lingard's "History of England," "The Court of James I," Robertson's "Charles V," "The Life of Latimer," "The North American Indians," and Cowper's

"Letters." In 1827, are entered, among others, "Castle Rackrent," Scott's "Life of Dryden," Captain Head's "Narrative of a Journey across the Pampas and Among the Andes" ("rather interesting"), "The Favourite of Nature, A Novel" ("the Heroine a most odious character"), "The Establishment of the Turks in Europe," "Chronicles of the Canongate," O'Driscol's "History of Ireland," and "The Clubs of London" ("bad could not finish it"). Which is more than some of us may be expected to manage at seventy-seven. She died in 1842, at the age of ninety-two, and is buried in Chertsey parish church. Mr. Powys tells me that he remembers two old ladies who were daughters of Charles and Elizabeth Fox, but the direct line has not survived.

4

In 1788, Fox visited Switzerland and Italy. At Lausanne he called upon Gibbon, who was then fifty-one years of age. Samuel Rogers, in a note on the occasion, tells us that the historian talked a great deal, "generally ending his sentences with a genitive case," while Gibbon himself wrote in his journal: "Mr. Fox gave me two days of free and private society. He seemed to feel and even to envy the happiness of my situation, while I admired the powers of a superior man, as they are blended in his attractive character with the softness and simplicity of a child. Perhaps no human being was ever more perfectly exempt from the taint of malevolence, vanity, or falsehood." Among the Hinchingbrooke papers is a letter from Lancelot ("Capability") Brown to Lord Sandwich, dated at Lausanne October 18, 1788, in which he says:

I spent two very pleasant days with Mr Fox, in his tour through this country. When he was at Zuric he went to see

Lavater, the famous physiognomist. After he was gone Lavater drew the following portrait of him: *

"Brow indomitable; Greater wealth of ideas and imagination than I have ever seen marked on any countenance in the world; Eyebrows proud, masterful, dominant; The eye full of genius, piercing, fascinating, magical; Nose mediocre; The cheeks voluptuous; Mouth indicates a surprising and agreeable volubility; and the lower part of the face, sweet, affable, and sociable."

I think it very much resembles Mr. Fox's character.

Mrs. Armistead accompanied Fox on this journey, and they were detained in Italy by an accident to her ankle. It was then, as we have seen, that Burke wrote to Charles urging his immediate return in connection with the Regency crisis. As that passed, first undertones of the French Revolution broke softly upon the world.

* The original is in French, and is quoted from another source in *Wilkes, Sheridan, Fox,* by W. F. Rae, 1874.

CHAPTER XIII

The French Revolution. The French War Fox and Burke

1789–1797

I

ON JULY 14, 1789, THE BASTILE FELL TO THE FURY OF a Parisian mob; and on the 30th, Fox wrote to Fitzpatrick, "I was not surprised to hear you meaned to go to Paris, but am very much so at you having put it off. If you go you had better come this way, as I should be glad to talk it over with you a little, and it is not quite impossible but I may go too. How much the greatest event it is that ever happened in the world! and how much the best!" This attitude towards the French Revolution is one that he was steadily to maintain to the end. In 1795, he disavowed, in simple and conclusive terms, having given "the least countenance to the scenes of blood and cruelty" that had attended that vast and demoniac upheaval. But he refused to let these horrors at any time blind him to the just verities of which they were the dreadful excesses, and he regarded the overthrow of the Bourbon family as "an event favourable to the liberty of Europe . . . because with it fell the reign of despotism." Almost alone in English public life, he held a view commonly shared by the poets of his time, and since established by the disputes of history. The cause is not one for present debate, but the part that Fox took in it, wheth-

er we approve or not, was undeniably a brave one, and it was at the outset subjected to a personal test of a very poignant nature. As we follow the progress of his relations with Burke, we are conscious of an undercurrent, if not of distrust, of something less than spontaneous cordiality. Whatever his faults may have been, Charles was the least envious of men, and two of his remarks in later years noted by Rogers had their origin, we need not doubt, in truth. "Burke was a most impracticable person, a most unmanageable colleague—he would never support any measure, however convinced he might be in his heart of its utility, if it had first been proposed by another"; * and again, "After all, Burke was a damned wrong-headed fellow, through his whole life jealous and obstinate." These were words after the event, and Rogers had a way of giving a malevolent turn to his reports, but our suspicion leaves us not wholly unprepared to find Fox saying something of the sort.

At the beginning of 1790, however, there had been no outward trace of disagreement between the two men, and they were united by long-tried and powerful bonds. They had fought a great fight together, and in every phase of their political fortunes they had been closely allied. Difficult though he may have been, Burke had learned to acknowledge Fox as the most powerful and the ablest man in their party, and to accept the leadership of one who, less than twenty years ago, had so sincerely flattered him with youthful homage. And Fox knew well how freely his own career in opposition had drawn upon the

* Dyce, Rogers's editor, very aptly cites the words of Brutus on Cassius:

> O, name him not, let us not break with him;
> For he will never follow any thing
> That other men begin.

vital force of Burke's political philosophy. It is true that Charles's influence had not succeeded, even if it had been used, in securing cabinet rank for Burke in either of his administrative terms, but there is no evidence that the great Irishman resented this. Supporting Fox in the India debates of 1783, he had spoken these words:

> And now, having done my duty to the Bill, let me say a word to the author. I should leave him to his own noble sentiments, if the unworthy and illiberal language with which he has been treated, beyond all excess of parliamentary liberty, did not make a few words necessary; not so much in justice to him as to my own feelings. I must say then, that it will be a distinction honourable to the age that [the liberation of India] has fallen to the lot of abilities and disposition equal to the task; that it has fallen to one who has the enlargement to compose, the spirit to undertake, and the eloquence to support so great a measure of hazardous benevolence. . . . He has put to hazard his case, his security, his interest, his power, even his darling popularity, for the benefit of a people whom he has never seen. This is the road that all heroes have trod before him. . . . [In his faults there is] nothing to extinguish the fires of great virtues . . . no mixture of deceit, of hypocrisy, of pride, of ferocity, of complexional despotism, or want of feeling for the distress of mankind. . . . I have spoken what I think and what I feel to the mover of this Bill. An honourable friend of mine, speaking of his merits, was charged with having made a studied panegyric. I don't know what his was. Mine, I am sure, is a studied panegyric; the fruit of much meditation; the result of the observation of nearly twenty years.

And now, there began a dispute, that was to end only with irreparable estrangement.

On February 9, in a debate on army estimates, Burke referred to France as being for the time politically expunged from the map of Europe, and as having lost everything, "even to her name." We had at this time no

reason to fear the ambitions of a hostile monarchy; our danger was in an excess of anarchy, of successive fraud and violence, of "an irrational, unprincipled, proscribing, confiscating, plundering, ferocious, bloody, and tyrannical democracy." Most of all did he deplore "the late assumption of citizenship by the army" in that country, and he was shocked that his right honorable friend (Fox) had spoken words condoning that event. On the 5th, Fox had said that if ever he had been disposed for increasing our standing army it would be now when they were learning from the example of France "that a man, by becoming a soldier, did not cease to be a citizen."

Burke now declared that it was with a "pain inexpressible" that he was "obliged to have the shadow of a difference" with his friend, "whose authority would always be great" with him and "with all thinking people." . . . His "confidence in [Mr. Fox] was such, and so ample, as to be almost implicit.

"He who profits of a superior understanding, raises his power to [that] level. . . . I have found the benefit of such a junction, and would not willingly depart from it. . . . I wish, on almost all occasions, that my sentiments may be . . . conveyed in [Mr. Fox's] words, and I wish, as among the greatest benefits to the country, an eminent share of power to that Right honourable gentleman, because I know that with his great and remarkable understanding he has joined the greatest possible degree of that natural moderation which is the best corrective of power; that he is of the most artless, candid, open and benevolent disposition, disinterested in the extreme; of a temper mild and placable, even to a fault; and without one drop of gall in his whole constitution."

Nothing could be handsomer; but it was the prelude to a searching and pitiless attack on conditions in France.

Fox in reply repaid Burke's compliments: "Such is my knowledge of his principles, such the value I set upon them, and such the estimation in which I hold his friendship, that if I were to put all the political information which I have learnt from books, all which I have gained from science, all which any knowledge of the world and its affairs has taught me, into one scale, and the improvement which I have derived from my right honourable friend's instruction and conversation were placed in the other, I should be at a loss to decide to which to give the preference. I have learnt more from my right honourable friend than from all the men with whom I have conversed." And then he opposed his own views to Burke's, plainly, courteously, and unequivocally. In a significant confession of political faith he disclaimed all servile submission to democracy—he was "equally the enemy of all absolute forms of government, whether an absolute monarchy, an absolute aristocracy, or an absolute democracy." He was "adverse to all extremes, and a friend only to a mixed government, like our own." Burke was unmoved, and the sitting ended with dissension brooding between the two friends.

2

Later in the year Burke published his "Reflections on the Revolution in France," and reconciliation with Fox in opinion was clearly impossible. In April, 1791, the quarrel declined into a personal breach, for which the responsibility was Burke's alone. Fox, in words that have been variously reported, eulogized the new constitution of France as "the most stupendous and glorious edifice of liberty which has been erected on the foundation of human integrity in any time or country." Unhappily, as

Burke rose "in much visible emotion" to reply, cries of "Question!" silenced him, and passions were pent up that might have been released in the heat of debate. A few days later Fox reaffirmed his opinions, and Burke uttered his ominous warning, that if he and his friend should here differ he desired it to be recollected that "however dear he considered his friendship, there was something still dearer in his mind—the love of his country."

On May 6, Burke was repeatedly called to order by the opposition for traducing the constitution of a friendly power, and Fox professed himself at a loss to know how one who had so eloquently defended "the rights of man" in America, could now stigmatize them as "chimerical and visionary" in France. It was Burke who had taught him that "no revolt of a nation was caused without provocation," and no denial of the master should now induce him to repudiate the lesson. Burke replied with complaints of misrepresentation, abuse of confidential exchanges of opinion, and unprovoked attacks upon his personal honor. Fox had proclaimed their difference on this matter to be absolute; he agreed that it was no less. At his time of life, it was, he knew, a grievous thing to risk the loss of friends, to risk, it might be, expulsion from his party. But his sense of public duty was clear, and with his last breath he would charge them, "Fly from the French constitution." Fox, in a whisper that was heard by many in the House, protested anxiously that there was no loss of friendship. "There is," exclaimed the speaker. "I know the price of my conduct—I have done my duty at the price of my friend—our friendship is at an end."

Fox rose, and with tears on his cheeks, for some minutes was unable to speak. He "wept even to sobbing,"

says one witness of the scene. The House, deeply moved, remained hushed as he recovered himself. Quietly he answered Burke's charges, examined the differences between them, and regretted "ignominious terms" that his friend had that day applied to him. Here Burke interrupted, saying that he "did not remember using any." Fox seized the words without hesitation: "My right honourable friend does not recollect the epithets: they are out of his mind: then they are completely and for ever out of mine. I cannot cherish a recollection so painful, and, from this moment, they are obliterated and forgotten." But Burke was inexorable in his personal application of a public breach that was now beyond repair. On May 11, he interpreted a speech from Fox as "sentence of banishment" from the Whig party.

Burke was now sixty-two years of age. It is difficult to see what reasonable reply he could have to Fox's charge of desertion from liberal principles; but of his sincerity, mistaken or not, there need be no question, and it was a touching figure that hoped that the "House would not consider him a bad man, although he had been banished by one party, and was too old to seek another." All that Fox could say was unavailing. Burke, declaring himself to be "a man disgraced by his party" and adding that he did not "solicit the right honourable gentleman's friendship, nor that of any man," left the House, and never spoke to Fox in private again. Charles made overtures more than once, always to be refused, as he was finally when he asked for an interview as Burke lay dying in 1797. Lord John Russell, who in his life of Fox is often a little uneasy in his hero's company, is clear upon the issues of this quarrel. "The separation of Mr. Burke from his party was a natural consequence of the position he had assumed in his book. The breach of

friendship with Mr. Fox was an effect of his own wilful intemperance. But it was no momentary passion which confused and widened the breach. Mr. Burke did not rest till he had estranged from Mr. Fox many of his best friends, and broken into fragments the great and firm body of the English Whigs."

Charles's political life from this time, 1791, until he seceded from the House in 1797, was somewhat dreary, sterile. Burke, indefatigably hostile, grew a little unscrupulous as, by mingled intrigue and invective, he sowed the seeds of dissolution among a party that for some time had no particular aim in the presence of Pitt's secure and in many respects enlightened supremacy.

The young minister's financial acumen and industry during the years following the Peace of 1783 had effected a remarkable recovery in the national fortunes. Fox, if he hinted that the credit was not wholly Pitt's, acknowledged the fair promise of the situation. On the question of parliamentary reform, Pitt found himself, as he thought, under the necessity of taking a firm line against measures that an opposition group, known as the Association of Friends of the People, brought forward without consulting Fox. The minister was compelled by this policy to discredit proposals of a kind that he had himself not long since submitted to the House. He justified himself by saying that while he had advocated them as a means of repairing a disorganized treasury, it would be folly to interfere with the electoral system in the present state of prosperity. Fox, rather than disown his convictim, supported measures that he considered to be ill-timed and dangerous, as aiming at a direct popular appeal rather than at conciliating opinion in parliament. But while the political conditions separated Fox and Pitt for the first time on this topic, their views remained es-

sentially in agreement. If Fox had a far greater sympathy than Pitt with the motives of the French Revolution, he had no less loathing of its horrors. In June, 1793, he was to write, "things at Paris have been going regularly from bad to worse," and in August, "there were reports of the Queen's being executed, but they were unfounded, and I still hope that they will abstain from this one act of butchery." On other matters, there was a general understanding between the two leaders. Fox was for unconditional liberty of religious thought, and Pitt, while more conservative in his views, was no bigot. Both were in favor of the rising movement for the abolition of slavery. When, therefore, in June, 1792, an effort was made to effect a coalition between the two men, there was a reasonable prospect of its success. After some hesitation, Fox exclaimed that "it was so damned right a thing, that it must be done." There were mutual suspicions, and some difficulty as to the respective offices to be held by the two men in the proposed new arrangement, but these were at no point insuperable.

The design, that might have been so fertile of national good, that might conceivably even have averted the Napoleonic wars, was wrecked by Burke. The animosity of the "man disgraced" had but one aim: to alienate Fox from his followers. He himself was already closely in touch with a considerable and powerful body of the Whigs, and now in their counsels he steadily plied the argument that Fox himself was the obstacle to any accommodation. On June 9, at a meeting with the Duke of Portland, Lord Loughborough, and others, he "declaimed on the conduct of Fox, that his conduct had disqualified him for office."* On the 22nd, he told

* For a full account of the negotiations see *Diaries and Correspondence of James Harris, First Earl of Malmesbury* (1844), II, 453–95.

Malmesbury that "Mr. Fox's coach stops the way," and "concluded by observing how very hard it was that on his account an arrangement calculated to preserve the country should be broken off; yet he foresaw that it would be . . . as there was no doing without Fox, or with him." On July 5, there was a feeling that there would be "no difficulty in arranging Pitt and Fox," and on the 11th, Portland announced that "Pitt certainly still wishes for an arrangement." But settlement came no nearer, and Burke lost no opportunity of delaying it. At length he had the satisfaction of seeing it abandoned. On August 24, he wrote to a friend, "the difficulty, in fact, is the arrangement of Fox." Negotiations were still active in December, at a further meeting on the 22nd of which month Burke "with his usual eloquence talked for an hour"; said that Fox's principles had been seduced; that his ambition had led him to embrace those of the French Revolution, and that if he renounced them it would be either as a convert or as a hypocrite; that there was no prospect of his being the one, and that they had grave cause to beware of the other—together with much more to the same effect, marked a good deal more by rhetorical anger than by logic. The rhetoric prevailed. Fox's friends were stampeded. Some, Burke and Portland among them, went over to the government, others, provoked by the apostasy, indulged irresponsible theories of liberty to which Fox would not subscribe. He was left almost alone in the purpose from which he never retreated—the establishment of liberal doctrines by strictly constitutional procedure.

3

His isolation rapidly became yet more complete. Pitt, intent on economic recovery, did not want war, but there

came a point when he was no longer prepared to oppose it on principle. He wished France no good, but had no inclination to ruin his own finance by incurring vast new obligations. His vision of international affairs was a narrow one, and he had a vague idea that the misfortunes of a formidable trade rival would somehow help his own exchequer; though if France was to be conquered, he was content to leave the task to Austria and her allies. But Austria, in traditional vein, was making a very uncertain job of it, and English opinion was becoming alarmed. In August, 1792, the French throne fell; in November the Convention, in which the revolutionary government was newly vested, issued a decree that was in effect a challenge to all peoples to throw off the yoke of their oppressors, which in the highly excited republican mind meant repudiating all existing authority.

The response from England was negligible. The members of a few crack-brained societies began to address each other as Citizen Smith or Citizeness Peppercorn, and issued absurd proclamations of which nobody took the slightest notice. When damage was done it was done not by an insurrectionary people rising against their sovereign, but by mobs incited to outrage peaceable meetings of respectable folk who genuinely believed that revolution was necessary in France, without the least intention of aiming at one in England; as in the disgraceful Birmingham riots of 1791, in which Priestley's house, containing his irreplaceable manuscripts and instruments, was destroyed together with those of many other reputable citizens, and in which there was at least a strong suspicion of instigation from quarters not unfriendly to the government. The Convention's decree, highly improper as it was, had not the smallest prospect of disturbing the domestic equilibrium of the English people.

But it was an admirable instrument for the purpose of inflaming the public temper, and Burke, who by this time was in a state of almost lunatic Francophobia, used it to the utmost. Pitt tried to stem the tide, but his knowledge of foreign policy was small, and his gift for enlightened diplomacy smaller, and he failed.

It is at this point that Fox might have saved the situation had he been in power. But when parliament opened in December, 1792, and the king announced that the Convention was plainly determined on war, Fox faced a country panic-stricken by the threat of a monster that was about to destroy universal law and order, a ministry that had lost control of events, and, moreover, a Convention in France that did indeed believe that a European war would be to its advantage. The alleged, and wholly unproved, insurrectionary movement in England was used as a pretext for calling out the militia, and the country responded with demonstrations of loyalty. Fox in debate carefully distinguished the generous motives of the French crisis from its base passions, and contended that it was not for us to dictate to a foreign power upon its choice of government. On January 21, 1793, Louis XVI was guillotined in Paris. Fox in the House pronounced it to be "an act as disgraceful as any that the page of history recorded. . . . Not only were the rules of criminal justice . . . violated; . . . not only was [Louis] tried and condemned without any existing law to which he was personally amenable, and even contrary to laws that did actually exist, but the degrading circumstances of his imprisonment, the unnecessary and insulting asperity with which he had been treated, the total want of republican magnanimity in the whole transaction added every aggravation to the inhumanity and injustice of those acts." But he still refused to admit justification for war. The Con-

vention's decree was, he allowed, an offense, but it was frivolous in the government to pretend that our security had been endangered by it, and our duty in the first place was at most to announce the terms on which we desired it to be repealed. The atrocity of the king's execution had shocked humanity, but it was, he believed, an accepted point of usage that a government as such could not be cognizant of crimes committed in another country unless its own safety or treaties were involved. Punishment of French criminals was not our business. But the powers of argument by this time were wasted. Whether Fox could have brought the Convention to its senses at an earlier stage by his understanding of European interests may be doubtful; it is certain that by February, 1793, neither his voice nor any other could have checked the war spirit in England. The Whig landslide continued. Fox's amendment to the king's address was lost by 290 votes to 50. On February 12, a message from the crown informed parliament that a state of war existed between this country and France. Fox was unable to bring the debate to a division, and on the 18th in proposing his "Resolution Against the War" he secured but 44 votes in a House of over 300.

4

On January 26, 1793, Charles addressed a letter to his Westminster constituents. "To vote in small minorities," he begins, "is a misfortune to which I have been so much accustomed, that I cannot be expected to feel it very acutely." Since this letter presents Fox's own defense of his conduct in opposing the French war, it is necessary to consider it in some detail. While he has learned to accept misrepresentation and calumny with fortitude, even with some pride, since these are so often the rewards of zeal and service to the state, he is informed on the present oc-

casion that many of his warmest friends among those whom he represents in parliament, disapprove of his conduct, and profess themselves "neither able nor willing to defend" him. He therefore proposes to place before them a precise record of his part in the recent debates. His first motion, taking the form of an amendment to the address, had been to demand that the government should give a true account of their motives in calling up the militia and adopting other emergency measures, as the summoning of parliament before the prescribed date. The alleged insurrections at Yarmouth, Shields, and other places were, he believed, a wholly inadequate explanation of steps so serious; and doubtless for the truth they must look to that other clause under which the present exercise of prerogative had been made—"the general state of the country." But before coming to a decision as to what should properly be done, surely the House had a right, indeed a duty, to ascertain what precisely the state of the country really was. If it was held to be against the public interest to reveal this to the House in open session, there could be no possible objection to giving the information to a secret committee, upon whose assurances the House would be able to proceed. Unable to answer these submissions, supporters of the administration had taken another line, and had defined the present measures as taken against the notorious progress of "French opinion." But "the sudden embodying of the Militia" and the drawing of regular troops to the capital were "measures to meet an immediate, not a distant mischief." If the government meant that the insurrectionary state of the country was their justification, they should produce evidence of that state, and this in Fox's view it was impossible for them to do. If, on the other hand, the latent danger of French example was their real anxiety,

they should say so plainly, and not demoralize the country with reports of imaginary tumults. Then follows a passage so strangely untarnished by time that it should be read in its remarkable entirety.

I am aware that there were some persons who thought that to be upon our guard was so much our first interest, in the present posture of affairs, that even to conceal the truth was less mischievous than to diminish the public terror. They dreaded enquiry, lest it should produce light; they felt so strongly the advantage of obscurity in inspiring terror, that they overlooked its other property of causing real peril. They were so alive to the danger belonging to false security, that they were insensible to those arising from groundless alarms.— In this frame of mind they might for a moment forget that integrity and sincerity ought ever to be the characteristic virtues of a British House of Commons; and while they were compelled to admit that the House could not, without inquiry, profess its belief of dangers, which (if true) might be substantiated by evidence, they might nevertheless be unwilling that the salutary alarm (for such they deemed it) arising from these supposed dangers in the minds of the people, should be wholly quieted. What they did not themselves credit, they might wish to be believed by others. Dangers, which they considered as distant, they were not displeased that the public should suppose near, in order to excite more vigorous exertions.

To these systems of crooked policy and pious fraud I have always entertained a kind of instinctive and invincible repugnance; and, if I had nothing else to advance in defense of my conduct but this feeling, of which I cannot divest myself, I should be far from fearing your displeasure. But are there in truth, no evils in a false alarm, besides the disgrace attending those who are concerned in propagating it? Is it nothing to destroy peace, harmony and confidence, among all ranks of citizens? Is it nothing to give a general credit and countenance to suspicions, which every man may point as his worst passions incline him? In such a state, all political animosities are inflamed. We confound the mistaken speculatist with the desperate incendiary. We extend the prejudices which we have conceived against individuals to the political party or even to the religious sect of which they are members. In this spirit

a Judge declared from the bench, in the last century, that poisoning was a Popish trick, and I should not be surprised if Bishops were now to preach from the pulpit that sedition is a Presbyterian or a Unitarian vice. Those who differ from us in their ideas of the constitution, in this paroxysm of alarm we consider as confederated to destroy it. Forbearance and toleration have no place in our minds; for who can tolerate opinions, which, according to what the Deluders teach, and rage and fear incline the Deluded to believe, attack our Lives, our Properties, and our Religion?

This situation I thought it my duty, if possible, to avert, by promoting an inquiry. By this means the guilty, if such there are, would have been detected, and the innocent liberated from suspicion.

My proposal was rejected by a great majority. I defer with all due respect to their opinion, but I retain my own.

His second motion, said Fox, had been to beg his Majesty to "employ every means of negotiation, consistent with the honour and safety of this country, to avert the calamities of war." It is inconceivable that his friends will question the propriety of this. In general terms, the advantages of peace can need no emphasis. If there are seeds of discontent at home, "war is the hot bed in which these seeds will soonest vegetate." Little as he had expected support, he had learned from experience that even the voice of a minority might sometimes deter ministers from "irrational projects of war," and he had spoken; that he had spoken in vain was, he hoped, in no sense to his dishonor.

His third motion had been to send a special minister to Paris for the purpose of exploring their differences with France, and either to resolve them, or to remove every doubt that the grounds of war were intelligible and just. Some people favored secret rather than open negotiation. He rejected the proposals as suiting "the conduct rather of such as sue for a favour, than of a great nation, which demands satisfaction." Others

professed an opinion that by sending a minister to Paris at that time we should give countenance to proceedings "most unanimously, and most justly reprobated in every country in Europe." In a postscript, written after the execution of the king, he justly observes that the presence of such a minister might "have afforded one chance more of preventing an act concerning which (out of France) I will venture to affirm that there is not throughout Europe one dissentient voice." And against the view in general he opposes a wealth of example: "We had a Minister at Versailles when Corsica was bought and enslaved. We had Ministers at the German courts, at the time of the infamous partition of Poland. We have generally a resident Consul, who acts as a Minister to the piratical republic of Algiers; and we have more than once sent embassies to the Emperors of Morocco, reeking from the blood through which by the murder of their nearest relations they had waded to their thrones. In none of these instances was any sanction given by Great Britain to the transaction by which power had been acquired, or the manner in which it had been exercised." Others, again, held that our duty was not to persuade but to conquer France. To what end? Had we grievances? Then how were they to be redressed, either before a war or after it, but by negotiations? If such negotiations were rejected by the Convention at the outset, then our justification for war would be plain, but not until then. It could but seem that the refusal to make approaches was inspired by a determination to engage in war with France on account of her internal concerns, and in order to force her to re-establish her own former government. And yet the king's speech had expressly disavowed any such principle.* Did

* "I have uniformly abstained from any interference with respect to the internal affairs of France." King's speech from the throne, Dec. 13, 1792.

anyone believe they could by arms force France to a counter-revolution? No—nobody seemed to maintain that.

Then were we to expend the "blood and treasure of this country in a hope that—not our efforts—but time and chance may produce a new government in France with which it would be more agreeable to our ministers to negotiate than with the present"? And what, again, would be the termination of such a war, but negotiation? Finally, there were people who objected to any recognition of France but as "the price of peace." But they must not confuse the present issue with that involved in the question of American Independence. In that case he had been of opinion that a gratuitous and preliminary acknowledgment of their independence was most consonant to the principles of magnanimity and policy; but in this instance "we have no sacrifice to make, for we have no claim; and the reasons for which the French wish an avowed and open intercourse can be only such as apply equally to the mutual interest of both nations, by affording more effective means of preventing misunderstanding, and securing peace." * Having made the point that the ministry had in fact recognized the new French government by continuing to act upon their commercial treaties after the overthrow of Louis, Fox concludes by saying that, having placed all the facts before his constituents, he awaits their verdict without misgiving. If his reasonings do not convince them, he will be disappointed, but at least he is confident they must believe that these reasonings, "and not any sinister or oblique motive, did in fact actuate me."

* When Fox made his proposal on December 15 for sending a minister to France, the British ambassador had already been recalled from Paris, and Burke excitedly declared that a state of war already existed. Fox, during the debates, regretted the recall, and took no notice of Burke's hysteria.

5

This letter * is masterly in its arrangement, its logic, and its temper. The style, if it inevitably takes an occasional turn upon the forum, is concise and easy, and distinguished always by clarity. As an example of eighteenth century English prose, it is no mean achievement. But it displays, also, for one reader at least, an intellectual poise and a political vision entirely beyond the scope of any of Fox's political contemporaries. When a country is betrayed or exalted into the passions that accompany the inception of a war, argument has little weight; it may be held that it should have none. And yet there will always be men inflexibly resolved not to abandon their reason in a crisis, no matter what the penalties of candor may be. Fox's argument was swept aside in the rush of popular feeling, but it was never answered. It was, indeed, unanswerable. The superstition that Fox did not love his own country will not, as we have said before, bear a moment's investigation. He loved her institutions, her parliamentary procedure and life, her social manners, her historical traditions, her literature, her sports, and her landscape, as devotedly as any Englishman who ever lived. And, with a patriotism that no adversity could daunt, he loved her honor. There will always be differences of opinion as to how that honor best is served. Many impartial judges of history may believe that at the beginning of 1793 it was contingent on a war with France: others may conclude that had Fox been in

* It may be read in Fox's *Collected Speeches* (1815) and also in the Everyman Library edition of his French war speeches, edited by Miss Irene Cooper Willis, who contributes an admirable introduction. The letter was one of the few things Fox himself published. It quickly ran through several editions; as I write I have before me the sixth, dated, like the first, 1793.

power, he might have preserved peace and a yet finer honor at once.

War having become an established fact, he pledged himself in his resolution of February 12, to loyal support of the king in "repelling every hostile attack against this country," but added that every effort "consistent with the honour of his Majesty's crown, the security of his allies, and the interests of his people," to effect a settlement should continue to be made. But the country was in no mood now to discuss peace on any terms, good or bad.

Fox was left with an impotent and almost unheeded minority in the House, and stripped of popular credit. But such loyalty as he retained was uncompromising. It was said that there were only forty of the liberal Whigs left, but that to a man they would willingly be hanged for Fox. Among them were Sheridan and Fitzpatrick; Adam the duelist and Thomas Erskine the future lord chancellor; Philip Francis the reputed author of "Junius"; the fifth Duke of Bedford and his brother Lord John Russell, who succeeded him in 1802; and Charles Grey, now a young man under thirty, who forty years later was to be prime minister as Earl Grey, and who, in a new age of English politics, was to keep the name and fame of Fox in pious recollection. It was the last-named who, in the debate on our representation in Paris, sounded the ringing note of a devotion that was to inspire the faithful few: "If the enthusiasm of any man for my right honourable friend who made the motion be abated, mine, on the contrary, is if possible increased. The state of the country calls upon my right honourable friend to stand in the gap and defend the constitution: he has said he will do so. And while I have power of body or mind he shall not stand alone. A firm band of admiring friends, not the less respectable nor the less likely to prevail from

the present disproportion of their number, will faithfully stand by him against all the calumnies of those who betray while they affect to defend the constitution." These were brave words, and Fox knew how to value confidence so generous. On the same occasion, another devotee, a man several years older than Fox himself, declared in the face of a full and hostile House, with the renegade Whigs ranged uneasily behind the treasury benches, "While I live and breathe, I will maintain these opinions. I know the public and private virtues of my right honourable friend; and whenever I separate from him I shall consider that day the most degraded of my life."

6

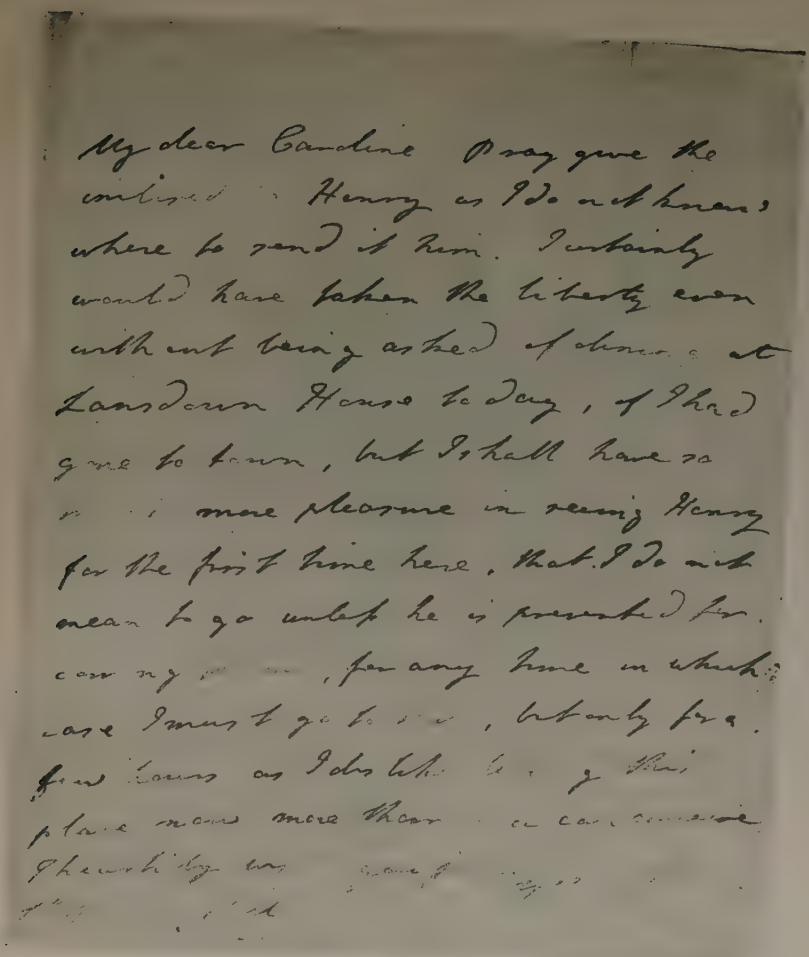
The progress of the French war in general does not concern us; we have only to indicate Fox's view of it. That "he rejoiced in the misfortunes of his own country and the successes of her enemies" is the kind of calumny that beset his days while living, and has afforded much satisfaction in some quarters ever since. It can best be answered in his own words. His attitude on declaration of war we have seen. On March 15, 1793, he said: "My support of the war now that we are engaged in it, is as sincere as that of his Majesty's ministers, although on very different grounds. I wish it to be supported with vigour, because by a vigorous war, we shall the more speedily obtain adequate and honourable terms of peace." On the 22nd, he "should support the ministers in carrying on the war." On April 30, "I repeat, that although I was not in the least degree accessory to the commencement of this calamitous war, yet I should be glad to be instrumental in bringing it to a conclusion as speedily as can be effected with due regard to the honour of the

country." On June 17, in moving a resolution for peace on the ground that the menace from France to ourselves and our allies no longer existed, he allowed that in so far as the war had been undertaken to meet that menace it was "just, prudent, and necessary." In January, 1794: "A desire has been universally expressed, that an honourable and secure peace should be established; such also is my desire; and if peace cannot be concluded on such terms, I will then grant that the war ought to be carried on." In April, while wishing that we had at the outset employed negotiation, if such a course "had failed to procure for us all we had a just right to demand, no doubt could have been entertained of the propriety of our entering into a war, and endeavouring to secure from France by the success of our army, that justice which she refused to the wisdom of our counsels." In May: "If we were to propose peace and fail, what should we lose? . . . This we should gain, that the Convention would no longer be able to delude the people of France into the persuasion that we were making war upon them, not for the usual objects of war, but for the destruction of their liberties." In December, on the king's speech: "In it, not a word was said of the Navy. He should only observe, that in our present circumstances, the neglect of building a single ship that could possibly be built, was a subject highly criminal." In March, 1795, "There is not a mere majority, there is almost a unanimity in favour of loyalty." In May: "He would quote the sentiment of Mr. Burke in the case of America—'Try peace and conciliation, and if these fail, then pursue war.'" In October: "A war of self-defence he could explain, he could justify." In February, 1796: "Let it not be understood that I wish for a dishonest peace, or peace on any other terms than those which are suitable to the interests, and consistent with

the dignity of this country." In October of the same year: "The right honourable gentleman says that a great danger threatens us. I agree with him in calling upon the people to resist an invasion on the part of France. Resist it, I say, with all your might. Be unanimous in your exertions: be vigorous in your efforts: draw your purses freely: contribute your personal labours cheerfully." And in May, 1797, at the moment when he was about to secede from parliament after long and unremitting opposition that, greatly as it has ennobled the records of those days, had made not the smallest impression on ministerial conduct, he said again: "We must combine all our strength, fortify one another by the communion of our courage; and by a seasonable exertion of national wisdom, patriotism, and vigour, take measures for the chance of salvation, and encounter with unappalled hearts, all the enemies, foreign and internal, all the dangers and calamities of every kind which press so heavily upon us."

These links, taken at chance from an unbroken chain of evidence extending over a period of five years, are sufficient finally to discredit the charges made against Charles's loyalty in general. But he was, none the less, from the first a merciless critic of the conduct of the French Revolutionary War, and, later, of its character. He adopted a triple line of attack. In the first place, allowing the necessity for war at the outset, he insisted that no moment should be considered as improper for exploring possible approaches to peace. Over and over again he besought the government to negotiate on terms that could not imperil the national honor, and as often his admonitions were disregarded.

Secondly, he resisted, with all the energy and eloquence that he could command, the shameless and demoralizing interference with the constitutional rights of



FACSIMILE OF LETTER FROM FOX
TO HIS NIECE CAROLINE

the people, that is so commonly the self-constituted prerogative of war ministers. Against panic-stricken treason and sedition bills, against the savage prosecution and punishment of honest people who differed from ministerial opinion, against the insidious encroachment upon every kind of freedom in the name of public interest, he raised his voice in fearless indignation. Speaking of Lord Howe's victory of June first, with the Channel fleet in 1794, "he had hoped that Lord Howe had not only conquered the French fleet, but reconquered the Habeas Corpus Act. . . . But they talked of a convention. What was the magical influence of this word, that if any set of people call themselves a convention the whole nation must be undone, [whereas] the nearest justice of the peace, he was fully convinced, might easily disperse them." In 1796, he said: "There are some inconveniences that necessarily arise out of a free constitution. [But] you cannot argue that subject in this House, for the people of this country have made their election: they have chosen a free government, and it is your duty to preserve it with all its inconveniences, if there be any that are worth mentioning. If, therefore, when ministers pretend an alarm, you are to give them whatever power they ask for . . . you desert the point on which the people of this country have already made their election; and, instead of the blessings which your ancestors intended for you, you take what may appear to you, but what never appeared to me, the advantages of despotism." And the last words he spoke in 1797, before his term of absence, were: "A new administration ought to be formed: I have no desire to make a part of any such administration, and I am sure that such an arrangement is feasible, and that it is capable of being done without me. . . . I have no wish to be the person, or one of the persons, to do it; but though

my inclination is for retirement, I shall always be ready to give my free and firm support to an administration that shall restore to the country its outraged rights." The reports of Fox's speeches from 1792 to 1797 cover nearly a thousand pages: and they bristle with these challenging onsets.

Thirdly, and even more significantly, Fox steadily grew in the conviction that the war was an improper one, and the ministers' conduct of it was incapable. He submitted constantly that there was no information before the House as to what its objects were. In a speech made in March, 1795, he summarized an argument in which he persisted until 1797. Were we fighting against or for France? That is, was our cause that of our Dutch allies on the Scheldt, and the insult offered by the Convention to our national integrity; or was it the reestablishment of the fallen government of France? If the former—and they had every right to assume that this "defensive" war was undertaken for no other reason—then the events of the war had shown that the Dutch cared nothing for our assistance, and were prepared to welcome their French invaders, while no one could pretend that at this time the French menace to this Island was a serious or practicable one. If the latter, we were fighting for a cause expressly disowned by the king and his ministers, the settlement of a foreign power's internal affairs. Would the government let the country know to which of these alternative motives for continuing the war they confessed? And in either choice, would they explain what could be the impropriety at this time of seeing whether negotiation might not lead to a favorable conclusion? In short, it seemed to him that the government, to justify the war, were advancing either a case that no longer existed, or a case that on their own admission was a bad

one. Whatever the facts, clearly we could not merely lay down our arms and silently withdraw from the contest. But that we had no proper reason for continuing the war, he was convinced; and how to end it but by negotiation he was at a loss to know. As to our own condition, Fox had no difficulty in showing that it was deplorable. "When Great Britain entered upon this war, she was promised the assistance of all Europe; and in less than six months, the whole burden of the war has devolved upon Great Britain."

7

That was in 1795. Eighteen months later, with views unchanged upon the justification of the war, he was showing that its management was drifting from bad to worse. "Ministers tell us there is danger of an invasion. I may be willing for a time to suspend any enquiry into the causes that have involved us in this difficulty and disgrace:—and into the conduct of those who have brought us into this danger; but must I not know what it is? Must the mere bringing us into danger be of itself a sufficient claim to confidence?" He now no longer had any faith in the original purity of motive, in the acceptance of which he had at first announced his support of the war. Referring to Burke's "Letters on a Regicide Peace," he said: "If those be incorrigible jacobins who detest the measures of his Majesty's Ministers, who are of opinion that their conduct has tarnished the glory of the country, and that they have conducted pusillanimously a contest which they rashly and unjustly commenced, if these are the incorrigible jacobins, I am glad to hear that they amount to eighty thousand. I wish they amounted to eighty million." At regular intervals he demanded an inquiry into the state of the nation, always

to face overwhelming defeat on division. More than once messages from the throne announced an intention to discuss terms of peace. Each time Fox welcomed a decision that he had unceasingly urged year by year, and each time the promise faded nebulously away.

That Pitt was a great war minister is questionable; and it may be an idle speculation to surmise that Fox would have been a greater. But that Pitt was often tied to a party against his own better impulses is, I think, clear to any candid reading of those times; and also that Fox, misguided or not, was governed from first to last by conviction that was as disinterested as it was independent. His position, for a man of his temperament, was a melancholy one. It meant loss of friends, popularity, and respect, all of which he cared for with a touching ingenuity. To know Fox at all, is to know that such a passage as the following is utterly devoid of sentimental rhetoric: "For myself, let gentlemen catechise me as much as they please; let them spread papers, stating me to be an enemy of my country; let them blacken me . . . ; let them even be successful, if they can, in their endeavours to make me odious to my countrymen; still will I persist in doing my duty to the public, and never relinquish it but with my life." Here was no cheap boast. He knew the price that he was paying, and knew it to be a heavy one. It is doubtful whether any man in English public life who has so greatly valued popular esteem, has so bravely borne the loss of it. As he passed the print shops of Bond Street and Piccadilly and every other morning saw some foul travesty of himself leering from the windows, he often had to bite hard on the bullet. Not that he was despondent. He enjoyed the fight, and he was assured of the affection of a few unalienable friends. But he loved England, and he believed that she

was being violated. His protests were held up to gross mockery, and he was far too sensitive a being not to mind that.

The contest was a wearing one, but Charles, for all his sensitiveness, was uncommonly tough in the grain. It was only after five years that he decided that in the present temper of the country and under the present ministry, it was useless to repeat arguments for the hundredth time, and for the hundredth to see them ignominiously rejected. The critics who have most severely reprimanded his secession from parliament are those who have most shrilly declared the futility of his presence in it. Our view coincides with theirs in neither respect. For five years he defended a certain principle in face of every discouragement. Some people may think it a bad principle; he thought it a good one, and he more than any man of his time impressed it upon English life, with a genius that has never been forgotten.

At the end of five years he retired, not in despair, nor in a sulk, but because he believed that secession was now the boldest and most effective step to take. His own words are explicit, and they are his own perfect vindication. On May 26, 1797, at the end of a long speech of unimpaired vigor, he said:

> And now, Sir, before I sit down, allow me to make a single observation with respect to the character and conduct of those who have, in conjunction with myself, felt it their duty to oppose the progress of this disastrous war. I hear it said, "You do nothing but mischief when you are here; and yet we should be sorry to see you away." I do not know how we shall be able to satisfy gentlemen who feel towards us in this way. If we can neither do our duty without mischief, nor please them with doing nothing, I know but of one way by which we can give them content, and that is by putting an end to our existence. With respect to myself, and I believe I

can also speak for others, I do not feel it consistent with my duty totally to secede from this House. I have no such intention; but, Sir, I have no hesitation in saying, that after seeing the conduct of this House, after seeing them give to Ministers their confidence and support, upon convicted failure, imposition and incapacity; after seeing them deaf and blind to the consequences of a career that penetrates the hearts of all other men with alarm, and that neither reason, experience, nor duty are sufficiently powerful to influence them to oppose the conduct of government, I certainly do think that I may devote more of my time to my private pursuits, and to the retirement which I love, than I have hitherto done; I certainly think I need not devote much of it to fruitless exertions, and to idle talk, in this House. Whenever it shall appear that my efforts may contribute in any degree to restore us to the situation from which the confidence of this House in a desperate system and incapable administration has so suddenly reduced us, I shall be found ready to discharge my duty.

Thereafter, with a brief reappearance seven months later, he and his followers absented themselves from parliament until the beginning of 1800.

CHAPTER XIV

Secession from Parliament. Private Life
1797–1800

I

FOX, ONCE HAVING RETIRED FROM ACTIVE PARLIAMENTary life, was reluctant ever to return to it. Political events were yet to override his inclinations, and before he died he was to experience once again a brief term of office. But now in 1797, he was more than content to fill up his days with a life of easy courtesy and scholarship at St. Anne's Hill. He was not inactive; he liked Cowper's lines,

> How various his employments whom the world
> Calls idle!

He contemplated writing a history of the reign of James II, and later made some actual progress with the work, which was published in fragmentary form in 1808. It was, however, not until 1800 that he concentrated his studies on the subject. In the meantime he made a leisurely but constant survey of the literature, particularly the classical literature, that he loved. He wrote a long argumentative letter to Grey about the nightingale's note, contending that Theocritus and Chaucer were right in holding it to be merry, against the far less reliable authority of the tragic poets, and concluding: "I am afraid I like these researches so much better than those that re-

late to Shaftesbury, Sunderland, etc., as I do those better than attending the House of Commons." And, bookish man though he was, he was never difficult to dig out. A fine morning would see the green-aproned figure very seriously doing nothing much in the garden, and a warm summer evening might at any time mean a little excursion to some riverside resort with Elizabeth.

Under her influence, he had mended his habits altogether. He had become orderly without being ascetic, and in 1793 his finances had been put into sound shape by the generosity of a group of friends, who at a meeting in that year at the Crown and Anchor in the Strand, under the chairmanship of Sergeant Adair, resolved to form a fund from which an annuity was to be paid by trustees to Charles in recognition of his public services. The proposal was submitted to him, and accepted in these terms:

St Anne's Hill. June 6th 1793.

DEAR SIR,

You will easily believe that it is not a mere form of words, when I say, that I am wholly at a loss how to express my feelings. . . . To receive at once from the public such a testimony of the disinterestedness of my conduct, and such a reward as the most interested would think their lives well spent in obtaining, is a rare instance of felicity which seems to have been reserved for me. It would be gross affectation, if, in my circumstances, I were to pretend that what is intended me is not in itself of the highest value. But it is with perfect sincerity that I declare, that no manner in which a fortune could have come to me, would have been so gratifying to the feelings of my heart. I accept, therefore, with the most sincere gratitude, the kindness of the public; and consider it as an additional obligation upon me, if any were wanting, to continue steady to the principles which I have uniformly professed. . . .

Subscriptions came in lavishly, from every rank of society; the great families, professional men, substantial

merchants, country parsons, yeomen, and shopkeepers from all over the country sent in handsomely according to their means. It was no credit to Fox to be in this necessity, but the relief was honorably offered and honorably taken. He had been an irresponsible spendthrift, but he could with a clear conscience say that his public career had been disinterested, and that he had never been a penny the better off for it save by his due wages as a minister. In an unpublished letter from the Powys papers referred to later, he says: "Of this I am sure, that I never had any publick Money in my hands for half an hour." Among the chief promoters of the fund was Coke of Norfolk, and he became one of three trustees, who found themselves in a position to pay their friend a yearly income of three thousand pounds. Charles never visited Newmarket again, nor played cards for money. It was on this occasion that George Selwyn, when he was told of the proposed annuity and asked how he thought Charles would take it, replied, "Why, quarterly to be sure."

Fox now, in 1797, was still under fifty, but his life had been a turbulent one. He had led a long fight against odds on which he seemed to make no impression. With a secure income, with small public ambition left, and even less hope of realizing it, convinced that he had stood by his public duty until to do so longer was a mere waste of energy, he secluded himself at St. Anne's Hill with a sense of well-earned and greatly welcome relief. His life there was very pleasant, and it is pleasant to contemplate.

2

In 1791, began a long correspondence between Charles and his nephew, Henry Richard Vassall Fox, "dear young one." The boy was then eighteen years of age, and had inherited the Holland title in infancy from his father,

Stephen, Charles's brother. Fox was devoted to his young kinsman, watched his education with the most affectionate interest, and delighted to renew his own youth by discussing life with him on terms of easy intellectual equality. "I rather agree with you that it would be better that Sheridan should not attend the meeting of the 14th of July." "I have not read Burke's new pamphlet, but hear a very different account of it from yours." "I believe the love of political liberty is not an error; but, if it is one, I am sure I never shall be converted from it—and I hope you will never be." "Your contrast of the manner in which the causes of Tyranny and Freedom are treated here is very good, and I daresay I shall make use of it in the House of Commons; so when you get the papers with the debates look sharp." "By the way, you should tell me, as I do you, what books you are reading, with a little criticism, if it is ever so little." "I have employed my odd five minutes etc. lately in looking over Horace's Odes; pray tell me which you think the most perfect and beautiful of them in their respective styles."

And so on. Throughout the correspondence, which was constant over a period of fourteen years—considerably more than a hundred of Charles's letters to his nephew during that time are preserved—the older man repeatedly emphasizes his distaste for the political scene, while making a current summary of political events and persons. His only public satisfaction is that he has always opposed the French war; his only hope, continually frustrated, for peace. Literature he discusses with inexhaustible zest. Pope he thought a miserable moralist and a superficial and faulty reasoner, but highly endowed in poetry and wit. Dryden he admired greatly (he thought of editing him), but found that he "wanted a certain degree of easy playfulness that belongs to Ariosto." Chaucer

he was never tired of praising, and he considered that Burns had written "the best pastorals in any modern language." But the classics were his real devotion. He returns in his letters to the Greek and Roman poets with ever advancing eagerness. What the authorities may say of his scholarship I do not know; but no one can dispute his passionate enthusiasm. It is interesting to note that he thought the Medea to be beyond question "the best of all the Greek Tragedies." But his last word is always for Homer. "You see, I have never done with [him]; and, indeed, if there was nothing else, except Virgil and Ariosto, one should never want reading."

Also in these letters there is frequent and delightful evidence of the tenderness that was so deep a part of Fox's nature. Sometimes it is but playfully implied: "I have played at tennis several times since I saw you, and last week, two days following, single matches which rather over-fatigued me, but I shall nevertheless be at it again Wednesday, not tomorrow, because if it is fine we go to the boat-race at Richmond." And, on the same topic: "We had a very pleasant party . . . but I am sorry to tell you that the Duke [of Bedford] has overtaken me at tennis, and beat me even; last year I gave him near fifteen." Apologizing for delay in writing, he says: "When I get up I am in a hurry to get out, and when I come home, I am in a hurry to dress for dinner; and when I am going to bed I am tired and sleepy." Often the tenderness appears more directly. "Mrs. A. gives her love to you, and longs to see you here; indeed, at present, that is all that is wanting to our perfect happiness." "There is your picture on the other side of the room ready to say, I *say* my Uncle, and I do assure you that Mrs. A. looks at it with almost if not quite as much pleasure as I do." When his nephew makes his first speech

in the Lords, Fox praises him, and someone in the family suggests flattery: "I do assure you, my dear Young One, that I do not flatter you at all, if by flattering is meant saying more than one thinks, but if praise is to be called flattery, then . . . I know enough of the family constitution to know that it is remarkably good and wholesome for us all, and that too, in good doses." And when the young peer is emulating his uncle in taking up an unpopular position, he is told: "It is a sad thing, My dear Young One, to come young and vigorous into an old, worn out, jaded opposition: however if you can in any degree *rajeunir* it you will do . . . the greatest service to the country." We may leave this correspondence, so rich in Fox's most amiable virtues, with a passage of touching beauty:

> Never allow yourself to think for a moment that I can ever be forgetful of you, or not feel interested concerning you. Indeed, if I were to accuse myself at all upon this head, it would be rather for loving you too much, than too little. I do not mean more than you deserve, but with regard to that proportion which one ought if possible to preserve in one's affections. The truth is, that all men when they are no longer young must look forwards to something they expect to last beyond themselves. My friends whom I love most are all about my own age, and consequently, one supposes they will go off the stage about the same time as oneself. So when I have a mind to build castles, and to look forward to distant times with pride and pleasure, I must think of you and only you, and I feel myself quite sure that you will not disappoint me. Perhaps the natural disposition one has to love one's near relations, would be a more true account of the interest I take in you than all this philosophy. Be it as it may, you are in more danger of being teazed by my affection than of ever being hurt by my neglect.

The third Lord Holland lived until 1840, to preserve the memory of this affection with devoted and loving duty.

3

Before passing to the final stage of Fox's public life, we may supplement this account of his personal ways and contacts. Mr. Powys has kindly placed at my disposal a few unpublished letters from his family papers. The following, written from St. Anne's Hill to Dennis O'Bryen, the political pamphleteer, shows with a homely insistence how loath Charles was to disturb the seclusion of his later years. It is addressed to "Dennis O'Bryen, Esq., at Mrs. Hough's Fulham, to be left at Cloud's at the Leaping Bass Hammersmith." It is undated, but belongs to the period of Fox's retirement.

DEAR O'BRYEN,

Nothing can be worse than the weather to-night or the prospect for to-morrow; but if it is *very* fine to-morrow Morning, we will set out, but it must be *very* fine to tempt us. If we do not go to-morrow we will take the chance of a fine morning on Tuesday, but if that fails us, we must put off our expedition for the present till some more settled weather. I do not think we shall be at Richmond till two or thereabouts. Now as to staying two nights it is out of the question, and as I must have my way in some things, I do desire of you as a real favour not to press us, and no pressing will succeeed . . . as to being on the water till dark, I should think we shall have had quite water enough by the time we have had our dinner, as we set out at nine. . . . Remember we do not start to-morrow unless it is *very* fine.

Yours ever

C. J. F.

In another note to the same correspondent he writes: "When I say I shall be in town to-morrow, I mean *We* and (alas!) to stay." On another occasion he encloses a note of hand to O'Bryen for payment to some fund, and says: "I must desire you will attempt no excuses about the note on the other side for I will take none. My name

in the list, which Adam showed to some friends, was put down for 50£, and I should feel guilty of a fraud of the meanest kind, not upon you but upon those who might regulate their conduct in a certain degree upon my example, if I did not do what it was stated that I had done. The only consequence of your making any difficulty would be my sending the draft to Adam instead of to you."

For his niece Caroline he had an affection scarcely less warm than for "dear Young One," her brother. Among Mr. Powys's papers are several letters to her, from which the following paragraphs are taken:

I send you a receipt for an eye water on the same paper with that for Stephen's wash. The eye water may be used as often as you please, and, if I were to judge from myself, with very little effect, but many Persons have said they find great benefit from it. Mrs. F. would write but I have undertaken to do it for her and yet it is *I* that am commonly called idle. [1804]

* * *

I shall have so much more pleasure in seeing Henry for the first time here, that I do not mean to go [to town] unless he is prevented from coming to me for any time, in which case I must go to town, but only for a few hours as I dislike leaving this place now more than you can conceive. [1792]

* * *

DEAR CAROLINE,

Mrs Fox sends you a dozen pair of gloves which she brings you from L^y^ Holland, and begs you will be so good as to accept of a little *ridicule* that accompanies them,

Yours aff^ly^

C. J. Fox. [No year date]

* * *

Nothing can be so bad in every way in Politicks, only those who have more of malice than I take some delight in seeing the ridiculous figure Pitt makes. . . . The Rain, inconvenient as it is, adds to the beauty of this place considerably [1803]

* * *

I return you many thanks, my dear Caroline, for your letter and Henry's verses, some of which I think excellent, but they are unequal as all his are. . . . I wish you would teach Your Brother to write as well as you do. [No year date]

It was Caroline Fox who helped to soothe Charles's dying hours by reading aloud to him. "I like your reading, young one," he once said to his nephew, "but I liked it better before I heard your sister's. That is better than yours, I can tell you."

4

Fox does not appear to have been intimate with any of the notable poets of his time, but with several of them he had relations greatly to his credit. Landor, indeed, inflamed always by acute horror of Napoleon, spared a little of his voluble wrath for Fox. "I believe there has rarely been a weaker or a more profligate statesman than Mr. Fox: but," he adds, "he was friendly and affectionate; he was a gentleman and a scholar." Further: "He was unlucky in all his projects. On one occasion he said he had a peace in his pocket, when he no more had a peace in it than he had a guinea. He was, however, less democratic, less subversive of social order and national dignity than his rival [Pitt]." Again, "He had more and warmer friends than any statesman upon record; he was the delight of social life, the ornament of domestic. Mr. Fox was a man of genius and (what in the present day is almost as rare) a gentleman." * In his "Commentary" on Fox, written in 1811, Landor allowed these personal considerations little weight. His attack on Fox's political character there knew no moderation. But while Landor was a great poet, he was also sometimes a great donkey,

* These passages are quoted by Mr. Stephen Wheeler in his edition of Landor's *Commentary* on Trotter's *Memoirs* of Fox.

and as by various wrong attributions of statements it is clear that he was often extremely uncertain as to who was who, confusing Charles now with Chatham and now with William Windham, his opinion has not too serious an authority.

Coleridge also attacked Fox's political conduct. The poet had long been an admirer of the statesman. In 1793, when he was at the University, Coleridge wrote: "Have you read Mr. Fox's letter to the Westminster Electors? It is quite the political *Go* at Cambridge, and has converted many souls to the Foxite faith." In 1800 he told Southey "except Fox, I, you, or anybody might learn to speak better than any man in the House." But on the Peace of Amiens, in 1802, Coleridge, at the age of thirty, wrote two open letters to Fox in the Morning Post (November 4 and 9),* criticizing Charles's reception of the terms, his visit to France, and his association there with Napoleon. He attributed the highest motives to a man whom he denounced as having fallen into a morass of political error. He allowed that his views and conduct on the outbreak of the Revolution had been shared and applauded by all enlightened citizens of his own country. "You welcomed this stupendous event, Sir, with the spirit of an Englishman; with a spirit, which, even in its excesses, was truly English." To Fox's personal worth and character he paid glowing tributes, and he allowed further that in his constant attacks on the British ministry Charles had been amply justified. But he argued that he had been misled into thinking that everything French must necessarily be right, and that the present designs of Bonaparte and the conditions of the peace were such as should be supported by no liberal and sound English patriot. We need not here renew a forgotten quarrel. There was

* Reprinted in Coleridge's *Essays on His Own Times,* II (1850).

something in what Coleridge said, and in the Morning Post he said it in his best dialectical style, making, in particular, very effective ironic play of the honors that Fox received in France. But also there was a good deal to be said for Fox. Sir Robert Adair, writing to Lady Melbourne, on October 2, 1802, from Paris, said:

I asked Fox about his election to the Institute. He says that he knows nothing more about it than that La Place and some of the great literary men told him it was intended. I have no doubt that it will be so. If anybody should abuse Fox for receiving these and other distinctions (I say receiving for he does not in the least court them) tell him to come to live a short time in Paris, and see with his own eyes the necessity of there being some leading man in the Councils of England to whom France can look up for the preservation of peace. I promise you that war is half declared with the present incapable ministers, who are just able to irritate but much too weak to encounter France or gain any point over her. Addington and his little council of youngsters will be receiving continued insults from France, and when they can submit no longer they will go to War about a straw. If Fox were minister Buonaparte could not quarrel with him without rendering his views plain to the world, and quarrelling with all the public opinions of his own country at the same time. . . . In a question of Peace or War it [public opinion in France] would be greatly felt, and yet more perhaps decisively if it were a question of War with a Gov^{t} of which Charles Fox was the head. A war with Addington would be much more easy, and indeed, as I said before, is half made already.*

Fox once said that he never read anything written against him: "that is what they want me to do, but I won't." And eight months after the Morning Post attack we find Coleridge writing to Southey: "It grieved me to hear . . . that Fox had not read my two letters, but had heard of them, and that they were mine, and had expressed himself more wounded by the circumstance than anything that had happened since Burke's business."

* Mabell, Countess of Airlie, *In Whig Society*, 1921.

About 1781, Fox, at Burke's house in Beaconsfield, had made the acquaintance of George Crabbe, then a young man of twenty-six or so. Fifteen years later he met him again at a country house shooting party. He expressed his disappointment that no new poem had appeared in succession to "The Newspaper" of 1785, and at Crabbe's wish promised that he would look over anything that the poet might later have ready for the press. In 1806, Crabbe was preparing to publish "The Parish Register," and reminded Fox of his promise. Fox died before the book appeared, but Crabbe's dedication to Lord Holland—"dear Young One"—tells us what happened:

> When . . . I had collected some poems for his inspection I found my right honourable friend engaged by the affairs of a great empire, and struggling with the inveteracy of a fatal disease; at such a time, upon such a mind, ever disposed to oblige as the mind was, I could not obtrude the petty business of criticising verses; but he remembered the promise he had kindly given, and repeated an offer which, though I had not presumed to expect, I was happy to receive. A copy of the poem, now first published, was immediately sent to him, and the poem which I have named "The Parish Register" was heard by Mr Fox, and it excited interest enough, by some of its parts, to gain for me the benefit of his judgment upon the whole. . . . Nor can I deny myself the melancholy satisfaction of adding that this poem (and more especially the history of Phoebe Dawson with some parts of the second book) were the last compositions of their kind that engaged and amused the capacious, the candid, the benevolent mind of this great man.

The condescension of eminent wigs to obliged and humble scribes is not always a grateful theme; but Fox did this sort of thing with a rarely becoming grace. Crabbe was a poet whose dedication was ample honor to anyone, but Charles could bestow the same liberal at-

tention on a little and uncounted man. In 1806, an anonymous writer published a pamphlet on Fox, with a title that covers a page and is too long to quote. He lived in a house two miles distant from St. Anne's Hill, and in his daily walks frequently passed the great man, finding it "Some satisfaction to gain even a passing glance at [not 'from'] a man of Fox's reputation." He had, we find, scarcely finished his first drama. He feared that it was too *somber* for a comedy. Anxious for the "opinion of a good critic," he submitted it to "a celebrated physician," with whose opinion—"excellent man" as he was—the dramatist was, however, by no means satisfied. "A sudden thought suggested itself, and I sent it to Mr. Fox, who at that time was unacquainted even with my name." He knew not how to excuse the trouble of the present application, beyond confidence in Mr. Fox's "goodness and general sympathy in the interest of others." And then, from Mr. Fox's profoundly respectful and devoted humble servant, this: "The Drama which accompanies this, is written by a man who is unused to the drama, but from long habit and education, has a passionate attachment to letters in general. May I presume, Sir, to request your perusal—may I advance one step farther, and humbly solicit your opinion."

Inconsiderable men often receive such solicitations, and have their formulae for polite evasion. But one of the most occupied, and one of the greatest, men in England answered the request in these words, conveyed by "one of Mrs. Armisted's servants." "Mr. Fox's compliments to Mr. ———, and in his present leisure has to thank Mr. ——— for the perusal of his drama." Charles read the play, thought it bad, said so, and recommended its author to throw it into the fire, "in revenge for its having occupied so much time." Which the author duly

did. And Fox thereafter kept a careful watch on Mr. ———'s fortunes, and finding them to be not as auspicious as might be, begged the privilege of offering a small loan. Mr. ———, to his credit, seems to have declined it, but thenceforth he greatly enjoyed the advantage of being allowed to pass the time of day with Mr. Fox on the morning walk, and even of taking a wayside seat with him and discussing English landscape and politics.

5

In 1805, Thomas Campbell wrote to Walter Scott: "It is surely good news to send a poet of the first order, that the great verdict of Fox is among the classical tastes given in warm admiration of your 'Lay of the Last Minstrel.'" And in 1806, Campbell, aged twenty-eight, notes in his autobiography: "What a proud day for me to shake hands with 'the Demosthenes of his time' . . . whose sagacity I revered as unequalled . . . and to walk arm in arm round the room with him. But I must own that when the great man treated me [so] I hardly knew . . . whether I was standing on my head or my feet. Luckily for me, however, Fox drew me into a subject on which I was competent to converse. It was the Aeneid of Virgil. . . . I delivered myself so well on the subject that he said to me at parting, 'Mr. Campbell, you must come and see me at St. Anne's Hill, and there we shall talk more about these matters.' Lord Holland afterwards told me that Fox said . . . 'I like Mr. Campbell; he is so right about Virgil.' What struck me particularly about Charles Fox was the electric quickness . . . of his attention. . . . At a table of eighteen persons, nothing that was said escaped him, and the pattest animadversion on everything that was said, came smack upon us."

John Cam Hobhouse in his "Recollections of a Long Life" tells us that Tom Moore was not so lucky as Campbell. Fox thought well of Moore, and wished to meet him. The master of ceremonies warned the statesman not to receive the Irish bard with a "Humph!" and turn his back, as he was apt to do in moments of abstraction. Charles promised to behave himself. But when Moore was presented, "Humph!" and the turned back betrayed the promise. Protest by the host at once led Fox to say that he would make all well by sitting next to Moore at supper. But as they moved to the table, Wordsworth attracted Charles's attention, and a three-quarters of an hour conversation left Moore without any further words from the man to whom he was anxiously prepared to improvise his best Irish melodies.

In 1801, Thomas Poole, who earns his place in the Dictionary of National Biography as a friend of Coleridge, noted that by his advice, and at Longman's expense, copies of the new edition of "Lyrical Ballads," "with appropriate letters," had been sent to "the Duchess of Devonshire, . . . Mrs. Jordan, Mr. Fox, Mr. Wilberforce, and two or three others." He dictated all the letters but one; that was to Fox, and was written by Wordsworth. In 1801, Wordsworth was thirty-one years of age, in the prime of his vision and intelligence. His, of all others, was perhaps the testimony that an Englishman in that year might wish to hand down as his passport to posterity. And he wrote this to Fox: "It is not without much difficulty that I have summoned the courage to request your acceptance of these volumes"; having referred briefly to the nature of the poems, he explains that he does not ask approval, but wishes to use them as an introduction to a man who may be able to help a class of people to whose difficult condition two of the poems,

"The Brothers" and "Michael," refer. It is in itself a noble appeal, and this is the man to whom Wordsworth believed he was appealing:

"In common with the whole of the English people, I have observed in your public character a constant predominance of sensibility of heart. Necessitated as you have been from your public situation to have much to do with men in bodies, and in classes, and accordingly to contemplate them in that relation, it has been your praise that you have not thereby been prevented from looking upon them as individuals, and that you have habitually left your heart open to be influenced by them in that capacity. This habit cannot but have made you dear to poets; and I am sure that if, since your first entrance into public life, there has been a single true poet living in England, he must have loved you."

If Fox's reputation had to stand by a single testimony, I do not know that a better choice than that need be made. Wordsworth there, it seems to me, said precisely the most honorable thing that can be said of any statesman, and he made no mistake in supposing that Fox deserved it. Wordsworth was careful of these high compliments, and he is a decisive witness. Fox wrote a suitable acknowledgment of the "obliging letter," confessed that he was "no great friend to blank verse for subjects which are to be treated of with simplicity," assured the poet that he admired many of the poems in the collection, and was pleased to find that Mr. Coleridge in one of the pieces from his hand "combats very successfully the mistaken prejudice of the nightingale's note being melancholy." Benjamin Haydon records in his journal of 1815 that at breakfast one morning Wordsworth said, "You always went away from Burke with your mind filled; from Fox with your feelings excited; and from

Pitt with wonder at his having had the power to make the worse appear the better reason."

The following letter, as a further example of Fox's interest in contemporary literature, is taken from Mr. Powys's papers. It is written from St. Anne's Hill, dated 17th February, 1799, to Matthew Gregory ("Monk") Lewis, who had published his celebrated romance in 1795.

SIR,

I received by Friday's Coach your Poem of the Love of Gain [a Satire, imitated from Juvenal], which I have read with great pleasure indeed. The whole of it appears to me to be excellent, but as even in the best Poems some parts must be better than others, allow me to say that I think the Lines following v.293 are some of the most beautiful in that style I ever saw. If I could venture to criticise, I should perhaps say that the word *een* in v.4 seems to me to give a sense quite different from Juvenal's, and that the Variation is not for the better.

You will readily believe that I feel myself to the highest degree flattered by your very handsome dedication, and that I am with great regard, Sir,

Your obliged humble Ser^{vt}

C. J. Fox.

In Lewis's "Poems" of 1812, are "Lines on returning from the Funeral of the Right Hon. C. J. Fox," that have considerable if wholly forgotten merit.

The Sovereign's power enjoined no public show,
The *pomp* was public, for the *grief* was so.

. . . . . .

Here thronged with swelling hearts and streaming eyes
The Good, the Great, the Learned, and the wise,
Here met to grieve firm Faith and Love sincere,
And patriot Worth sustained the kindred bier.
Here Britain sighed o'er many a ruined plan,
Friends o'er the Friend, and Nature o'er the Man!

. . . . . .

Nor did the Nobler ranks all tears engross;
A gentle anguish spoke a general loss.
. . . . . .
The Mourners past, alone marked out to view
By weeds of black; the Crowd were Mourners too.
. . . . . .
Still should his Line its public virtue prove;
Till Britain's Gratitude and Britain's Love
The Epithet and Name so well shall blend,
That who says—"Fox"—has said—"the People's Friend."

Not in the highest manner; but not so bad a manner either.

6

Of Fox's classical studies during his retirement, the most complete account is to be found in his correspondence with Gilbert Wakefield, beginning at the end of 1796, and closing with Wakefield's death a few months after his release from Dorchester Gaol in 1801. Wakefield's imprisonment in 1799 for sedition naturally roused Charles's sympathetic indignation, and he used all his influence to make the unitarian wrangler's confinement as easy as possible. The correspondence between the two men, published in 1813 in a series of sixty letters, is almost entirely confined to classical commentary, and reveals Fox as at least a very diligent scholar with an easy range of information. Occasionally there are excursions into other topics, as when, in September, 1799, Wakefield is distressed to hear that his friend has been injured in the shooting field by the bursting of his gun. He is distressed, but he adds: "Am I, Sir, indecently presumptuous and free . . . in pronouncing those pleasures to misbecome a man of letters, which consist in mangling, maiming, and depriving of . . . its existence, an inof-

fensive pensioner on the universal bounties of the common Feeder and Protector of all his offspring?" Fox replies that there is point in the argument, but that there is also much to be said against it. Logic fails him, as it has done a good many other men in the matter. "However, I admit it to be a very questionable subject: at all events, it is a very pleasant and healthful exercise." His wound goes on well, but is likely to keep him away from St. Anne's Hill, for more weeks than he had hoped to spend days in town. Wakefield returned to the subject, but Fox found it "best not to continue the controversy about field sports; or at least, if I do, I must have recourse . . . to authority and precedent rather than to argument." Wakefield assented: "I say, also, peace to our controversy! And I wish that every dispute . . . could terminate as amicably, and after such gentle litigation."

Charles, as we have seen, was devoted to every kind of game and sport. It was a devotion that began in childhood. When he was at his preparatory school, at the age of eight, he wrote to Stephen Fox a letter that I take from Mr. Powys's papers:

DEAR BROTHER,

I hope you are as well as I am. Mr and Mrs Fannen send their best respects, and hope to see you in a short time settled at holland house. Harry sends his love and a kiss. I chose to come to school before the FitzGeralds and I am very glad of it for I dont loose my time as they do and I see my mama as often and oftener than they do, for I come Home every Saturday and I shall be able to go to Eton before them. pray send FitzGerald's cricket bat as soon as you can.

I am Your Loving Brother

CHAS: JAS; FOX.

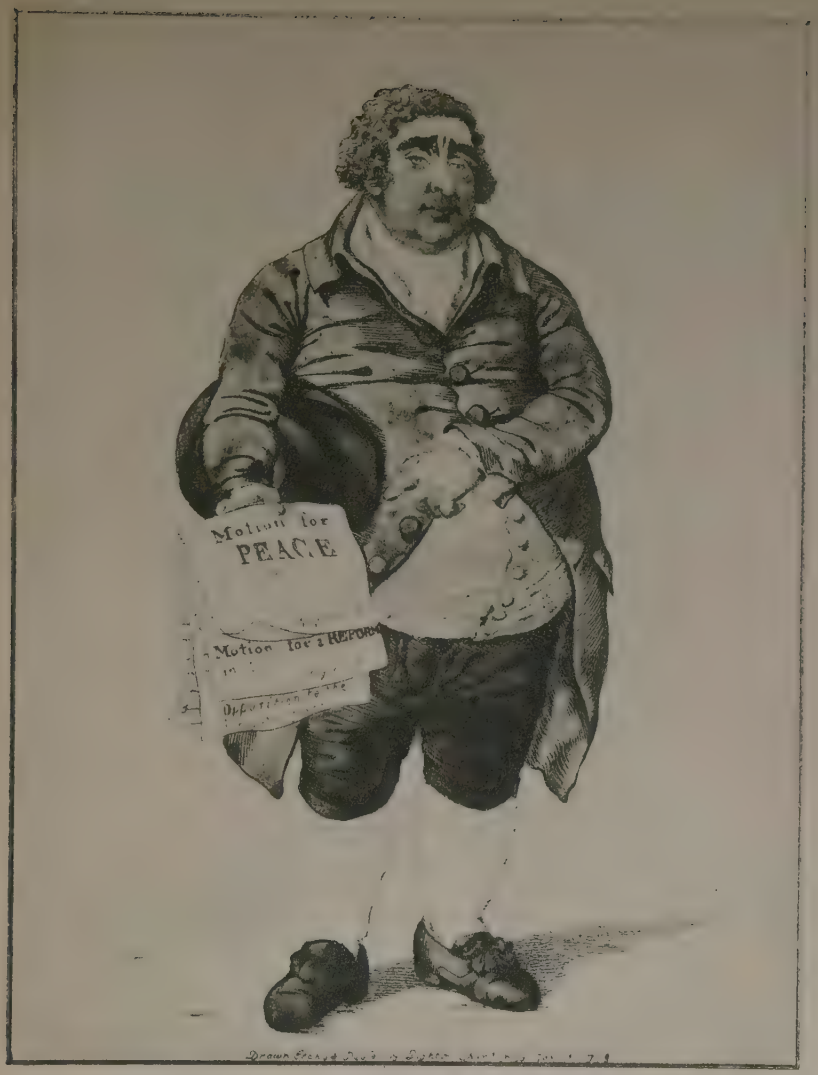
P.S. Aunt louse and Sally Ophaly and FitzGerald are well and send their love. Mama is not well, which you will be sorry to hear.

In the years of his retirement after 1797, Fox was seldom seen in his old London haunts. The last of his bets recorded in Brooks's book is dated March 24, 1794: "Mr. Fox bets Mr. Thompson 60 to 50 that Mr. Sheridan is not married on or before 26th March 1795." It cannot be said that his mind mellowed in seclusion, since it had never known asperities; but its native generosity grew more and more settled in habit. Coke of Norfolk said that Fox had hardly ever been known to speak harshly of any man. When someone called an acquaintance a damned stupid fellow, Charles replied that he was no such thing, but the best driver of a four-in-hand in England. Once in the House, Fox observed that he had been frequently caricatured, but he defied anyone to paint him in the character of Envy. Gibbon said of Fox and North, the violence of whose political conflict we have seen, that "they had never felt any personal animosity to each other, their reconciliation was easy and sincere, and their friendship had never been clouded by the shadow of suspicion or jealousy." Moore heard Lords Holland and Wellesley agreeing that even Fox and Pitt "had kindly and generous feelings towards each other."

7

North was among the notable figures of Fox's intimacy whom death claimed before the turn of the century. As early as 1784 one of the greatest of them all had gone. In December of that year, Windham, a pall-bearer at Johnson's funeral, wrote to Fox:

> His particular friends, including the Club of which you are a member, mean to attend his corpse on Monday morning from his house in Bolt Court, Fleet Street, to its place of interment in Westminster Abbey. You are not too much of a philosopher to share in the vulgar feeling that leads men to



JOHN BULL'S ADVOCATE (FOX) NONSUITED
Drawing by Dighton, January, 1798

pay homage to the dead. If you can make it convenient to be in Fleet Street by 11 o'clock, or in Westminster Abbey by 12, I trust you will put on a black coat and show yourself among the mourners at his funeral.

But the loss that came nearest to Fox's heart was that of Edmund Burke in 1797. He had his own views of Burke's character and temper, as we have seen, but the great Irishman had meant a great deal to his life, and, for many years, to his affections. After the breach of 1791 he had more than once made approaches towards reconciliation, but Burke was inflexible. When Burke's son Richard died in 1794, the two estranged friends happened to meet in the House of Lords. "Fox went up to Burke," Greville tells us, "and put out both his hands to him. Burke was almost surprised into meeting this cordiality in the same spirit, but the momentary impulse passed away, and he doggedly dropped his hands and left the House." He would consent to no meeting unless Fox signed a renunciation of his principles in respect of the French Revolution. Even at the end he refused his old ally's request for an interview. According to one early biographer, Charles broke down in tears when he heard that Burke was dead. And the same year saw the death of Horace Walpole, of whose fastidious interest in Fox's career we have seen so much evidence.

Fox's appearance has been made familiar to us by scores of portraits and cartoons. Readers of this book will have no difficulty in arriving at the truth by composing into one presentment the grand manner of Reynolds, the friendly directness of Dighton, and the pertinacious ferocity of Gillray. A dandy in his youth, Charles later affected a studied neglect in his clothes, partly perhaps from indifference, and partly in emulation of his revolutionary friends. He startled the House by adopting

Washington's style of dress, and his colors, according to the prints, were always buff and blue. In 1782, a young German schoolmaster, Karl Philipp Moritz, made a visit to England, and left a very entertaining account of his travels.* He heard Fox in the House on two or three occasions. "It is impossible for me to describe with what fire, and persuasive eloquence he spoke, and how the Speaker in the chair incessantly nodded approbation from beneath his solemn wig; and innumerable voices incessantly called out *hear him! hear him!* and when there was the least sign that he intended to leave off speaking, they no less vociferously exclaimed, *go on.*" He also heard Fox addressing the electors of Westminster: "Everyone called out *Fox! Fox!* I know not why, but I seemed to catch some of the spirit of the place and time, and so I also bawled *Fox, Fox!*" Moritz describes Fox as he saw him, thus: "This same celebrated Charles Fox is a short, fat, and gross man, with a swarthy complexion and dark; and in general he is badly dressed. There certainly is something Jewish in his looks. But upon the whole, he is not an ill made nor an ill looking man; and there are many strong marks of sagacity and fire in his eyes." Mrs. Amelia Opie, the novelist, who with her husband the painter saw a good deal of Fox in Paris in 1802, wrote to a friend: "I am very much afraid my spouse will not live long; he has gotten a fit of tidyness on him. . . . This confirms what I said to him the other day, that almost every man was *beau* and sloven, at some time of his life. Charles Fox once wore pink heels; now he has an unpowdered crop." The unpowdered crop, it is said, was sometimes not quite that. A white wig was a matter of some nicety, and Charles is supposed to have evaded the difficulty by using blue powder. Stratford Canning (b. 1786) wrote in

* Reprinted, in translation, by the Oxford University Press in 1924.

his recollections, "Once, and only once I saw the great debater. He was walking up the House to his seat. Dark but open features, beetling eyebrows, short stout legs, and a broad expanse of waistcoat composed the figure which still lives in my memory."

In 1798, John Bernard Trotter, a young man of twenty-three, who subsequently became Fox's secretary, began to visit St. Anne's Hill, and in his "Memoirs of the later Years of the Right Honourable Charles James Fox" we find a very attractive record of Charles's private life. We may close this chapter with the summary of an average day at St. Anne's Hill, as given by Trotter. "In summer he rose between six and seven; in winter before eight. . . . After breakfast, which took place between eight and nine in the summer, and at a little after nine in winter, he usually read some Italian author with Mrs. Fox, and then spent the time preceding dinner at his literary studies, in which the Greek poets bore a principal part. A frugal, but plentiful dinner took place at three, or half past two, in summer, and at four in winter; and a few glasses of wine were followed by coffee. The evening was dedicated to walking and conversation till tea time, when reading aloud, in history, commenced, and continued till near ten. A light supper of fruit, pastry, or something very trifling, finished the day, and at half past ten the family were gone to rest." That was the rake-hell of George III's Westminster at the age of fifty. All very orderly and tranquil now; but the fires were by no means extinguished.

CHAPTER XV

Paris. Return to Public Life. Death of Pitt. Fox as Minister

1800–1806

I

FOX SECEDED FROM THE HOUSE OF COMMONS IN MAY, 1797. In December of the same year, he made a momentary return to speak on taxation, and the official record tells us that as he passed through the lobby he was received by a crowd of strangers with "a great burst of applause and clapping of hands." Thereafter he did not appear in parliament again till February, 1800; but in January, 1798, he came for a short time under public notice elsewhere.

On the 24th of that month the Duke of Norfolk, at a dinner of the Whig Club, in honor of Charles's birthday, proposed the health of the guest with significant reference to George Washington, who "had established the liberties of his country." At the close of the evening, he gave a further toast, which also was drunk with acclamation: "Our Sovereign the People." The duke was dismissed from his lord lieutenancy of the West Riding of Yorkshire, and Fox felt called upon to associate himself plainly in public with his friend's disgrace. In May he addressed a meeting of the club, and there defended the doctrine of the people's sovereignty on the ground that by it alone could the Hanoverian succession, or indeed any succession since James II, be maintained. There was

logic in Charles's argument; and there was a good deal of passion. He concluded his speech by giving the toast again in Norfolk's precise words.

Pitt seriously thought of advising the king to prosecute, but was afraid of a Westminster jury. In a letter to Wilberforce, he discussed alternative proceedings. Charles might be summoned to the House; if he there disavowed the speech, the printer of the report could be prosecuted; if on the other hand he acknowledged it, he could be reprimanded by the Speaker. In which case he might be expected to appeal to the Whig Club against the House, which would be sufficient cause for expulsion. But then, again, there would be another Westminster election, which would probably be highly unpleasant for ministers. Or, happy thought, the House could legally commit him to the Tower for the remainder of the session; but again there were objections—moderate men might talk about a vindictive government, and, further, "at the end of three weeks he might be led home in procession, and have the glory of breaking windows." This Fox was really an exceedingly tiresome fellow, and there was "a very general indignation" against him. But what to do about it Mr. Pitt for the life of him couldn't tell. He decided at length to do nothing beyond advising the king to strike Charles's name off the list of privy councilors, which his Majesty enthusiastically did. Wilberforce was not quite satisfied about it. He was convinced that these Whigs would "take up the sword against government" if they dared. But when Charles later proved to be sound about slavery, the abolitionist's note changed.

It would be agreeable to suppose that Pitt was a little sly in his letter to Wilberforce, and intended no harm to Fox in any case. Between the two great rivals there was always apt to be an undercurrent of humor. When Fox

took his seat again in 1801, Pitt referred quietly to him as "the new member"; and on another occasion Fox, following Pitt in debate, concluded a speech by saying, "There is one point, and one point only, on which I entirely agree with the right honourable gentleman ['Hear, hear!' from all parts of the House], and that is, in the high opinion he entertains of his own talents." But it is clear that "Our Sovereign the People" upset Pitt's humor and his balance. Though, after all, it was presumably only a sense of humor that spared history the spectacle of Pitt sending Fox to the Tower.

2

St. Anne's Hill was Fox's life from this time until 1800. On January 17 of that year he wrote to his nephew that he had decided, "against inclination, common sense, and philosophy," to attend on the question of Bonaparte's overtures for peace. He went up to London, stipulating that he would stay at Holland House for two nights only. On arriving, he was informed that Pitt was ill, and the debate postponed. Dear Young One "saw tears steal down his cheeks, so vexed was he at being detained from his garden, his books, and his cheerful life in the country." The debate took place on February 3, and Fox spoke for something over three hours. Lord John Russell properly observes that his tactics were not wholly well conceived. Fox devoted a great part of his time to a discussion of the origins of the war and their justice. His views on this matter were well known, and history is at least evenly divided in his favor. But it was futile as policy at that stage to challenge a powerful government on a cause to which it had been deeply committed for nearly ten years. That Charles himself knew this, his long abstention from

parliament made clear enough. His present energy should have been concentrated on persuading the House to a careful consideration of the proposals now submitted by the First Consul, and it was only his incomparable power over an assembly whose political sympathies were overwhelmingly (265 votes to 64) against him, that enabled him for more than two of his three hours to dispute a decided issue. But even so, the speech was a masterpiece of sustained oratory. His faculty had not staled in retirement. Napoleon was told that there seemed to be no basis for peace, and Charles returned to St. Anne's Hill for another year.

In February, 1801, Pitt resigned on the question of Catholic relief, which he favored. The king was thrown into one of his mental storms by the event, but when the Speaker, Henry Addington, consented to take the seals, George recovered on reflecting that he was after all a little tired of so masterful a minister as Mr. Pitt. When Fox was convinced that the whole transaction was not merely a piece of juggling, he decided once more to attend the House. On March 25, 1801, he supported Grey's motion for an "Enquiry into the State of the Nation"; the motion was defeated, but now only by 291 votes to 105; and again Fox went back to St. Anne's Hill, this time for six months. In November he returned to take part in the debate on the preliminary articles of peace with France that had been signed in October and were concluded in the Treaty of Amiens in the following March. Fox, it need not be said, welcomed the peace, and none the less warmly because its terms were held by many people to be glorious to France rather than England. It had, he said, been a wholly inglorious war, and we had no right to expect, nor did he desire, a glorious peace. "If the peace be glorious for France,

without being inglorious for England, it will not give me any concern that it is so. Upon this point, the feelings and opinions of men must depend in a great measure upon their conceptions of the causes of the war. If one of the objects of the war was the restoration of the ancient despotism of France, than which I defy any man to produce in the history of the world a more accursed one . . . then I say it is an additional recommendation of the peace, that it has been obtained without the accomplishment of such an object." That Fox at this time sincerely believed in the liberal and pacific intentions of Napoleon as head of the new Republic, there can be no doubt.

3

He was soon to have his faith shaken. In the early part of 1802 he spoke twice in the House, once on the Civil List, and once to deliver a panegyric on his friend the Duke of Bedford, who had died at the age of thirty-seven, a nobleman of whom he said justly that "to be useful, whether to the public at large, whether to his relations and nearer friends, or even to any individual . . . was the ruling passion of his life." At the end of July, Fox set out for France with his wife, accompanied by Trotter and another friend. Traveling by way of Dover, Calais, Ghent, Antwerp and Brussels, they reached Paris towards the end of August. Everywhere on the journey Fox was received with civic and popular honors, and Trotter gives a pleasing account of the eager visits to picture galleries, the general sightseeing, and the daily reading of poetry, that made the long stages seem short. They observed everything with interest; the pigs in Cassel market place, "very miserable in appearance and condition—a fact which very ill agreed with

the excellent farming we had witnessed"; the theater at Lille, where "free admission was given, of course, to all Mr. Fox's friends"; "the amiable and happy females" of Ghent; the monotony of scene, relieved by "Tom Jones," of an otherwise agreeable though very hot journey by canal to Utrecht; the woods at The Hague; and "a considerable cultivation of poppies through French Flanders." On arriving at Paris, where they stayed at the Hôtel Richelieu, Charles found himself "very cheerful, and well pleased at having ended his journey, rejoiced that Mrs. Fox was quite well, notwithstanding great inconvenience from the heat, and animated by the novel scene, and variety of objects, crowding upon his attention."

But rumors were already in the town that the First Consul was dreaming of an Empire. This was by no means so pleasing to contemplate. Theaters—where there were cries of "Bravo, Fox!"—and galleries, excursions to Versailles and Saint-Cloud, and social amenities of various kinds took up several days. Kosciusko called on them, they dined several times with Talleyrand, and Lafayette was a visitor. At length the day was fixed when Fox was to attend the consular levee for the reception of foreigners. But before the event an incident occurred that further provoked Charles's suspicions. He was with some friends in one of the galleries at the Louvre when his wife cried out "Mr. Fox! Mr. Fox!" to announce that Bonaparte was passing in state to the Senate. The company crowded to the windows, but Charles, after a glance at the ceremony of green and gold liveries that boded ill for plain republicanism, turned hastily away and resumed his inspection of the pictures.* Trotter tells us of an-

* Accounts of this incident are given by Mrs. Opie, who was present, and by Dr. Parry—as reported by Hobhouse. Parry said that "Fox lifted up his hands with disgust and impatience."

other occasion when Fox was similarly affected by a parade of consular guards in the Place du Carrousel.

At the levee, however, Napoleon, "a small, and by no means commanding figure, dressed plainly, though richly in the embroidered consular coat, looked, at the first view, like a private gentleman, indifferent as to dress, and devoid of all haughtiness in his air." Fox was presented by the English ambassador, and Trotter, standing by, recorded Napoleon's words: "Ah! Mr. Fox! I have heard with pleasure of your arrival—I have desired much to see you—I have long admired in you the orator and friend of his country, who, in constantly raising his voice for peace, consulted the country's best interest—those of Europe—and of the human race." And more to the same purpose. But Charles was not responsive. He "said little, or rather nothing, in reply . . . nor did he bestow one word of admiration or applause upon the extraordinary and elevated character who addressed him. A few questions and answers relative to Mr. Fox's tour terminated the interview." Trotter observes that "to a complimentary address to himself, he always found invincible repugnance to answer." That may have had something to do with it; but altogether there is a feeling that Fox found Napoleon less of a success than he had hoped. And he probably was a little disconcerted when his friend Amelia Opie took to singing "Fall Tyrants, Fall!" along the Paris boulevards. A week later he attended a consular dinner, and one of Josephine's drawing-rooms. The latter function, says Trotter, was "short, cold, and insipid," and Madame ill concealed the disparity between her age and her husband's by a liberal application of rouge. Fox was not at all at ease, and, after paying formal respects, withdrew.

He found a number of English friends in Paris, and

with them was in high spirits, affecting particularly dinner parties for six. But a considerable part of his time was spent in searching the French archives for material for his "History of James II." To this work he devoted a great deal of industry, but in writing it he was always hampered by the conviction that his style suffered from thirty years of oratory in the House. There is something in the self-criticism, and it was confirmed by contemporary opinion when the book was published in a handsome quarto* by his nephew in 1808. Francis Jeffrey wrote: "As to the style of Mr. F.'s book . . . I do not think there are *any* felicities in it. It is often unequivocally bad, and when it is best, there is little more to be said than that it is nothing particularly objectionable." Tom Moore, in his diary for 1828, noted: "Talked of Fox's style in his 'History.' I pronounced it bad, but had no recollection how very bad it was, till I took down the book and read over some of the passages. All agreed that nothing could be more constrained and ungraceful." It is, in fact, very far from being as bad as all that. In temper the book is inspired by the Whig view of James that Mr. Belloc has recently attacked in a prejudiced but effective study of the last Stuart. In manner it sometimes moves heavily, but it always has the merit of clear-headed contact with its subject, and there are pages that are no mean examples of eighteenth century prose. Fox set a good deal of store by the work, but it is unlikely that it finds any readers today, and in perspective it is but an inconsiderable incident of his life. Even when he was employed on it, as we have seen, he was always ready to be called away to more congenial studies, and indeed he was often not indisposed to neglect even those. Rogers

* *A History of the Early Part of the Reign of James the Second with an Introductory Chapter,* by the Right Hon. Charles James Fox. London, 1808.

once remarked to him how delightful it would be to lie on the grass all day with a book in one's hand. "Yes, indeed," said Charles, "but why with a book?" In leaving the "History," we may give one passage representative of its best. Fox is writing of Monmouth:

> One of the most conspicuous features in his character seems to have been a remarkable, and, as some think, a culpable degree of flexibility. That such a disposition is preferable to its opposite extreme, will be admitted by all who think that modesty, even in excess, is more nearly allied to wisdom than conceit and self-sufficiency. He who has attentively considered the political, or indeed the general, concern of life, may possibly go still further, and rank a willingness to be convinced, or in some cases even without conviction to concede our own opinion to that of other men, among the principal ingredients in the composition of practical wisdom. Monmouth had suffered this flexibility, so laudable in many cases, to degenerate into a habit, which made him often follow the advice, or yield to the entreaties, of persons whose character by no means entitled them to such deference. The sagacity of Shaftesbury, the honour of Russell, the genius of Sidney, might, in the opinion of a modest man, be safe and eligible guides. The partiality of friendship, and the conviction of his firm attachment, might be some excuse for his listening so much to Grey; but he never could, at any period of his life, have mistaken Ferguson for an honest man.

A little rotund in figure, perhaps; but that, surely, is saying something very well.

4

Fox and his wife got back to St. Anne's Hill from France on November 17, 1802. Already the peace of March was in danger. Speaking on the address at the opening of parliament at the end of the month, Charles found himself abused in the Tory press as the "apologist of France" and the "agent of the First Consul." In the

middle of December, he wrote to his nephew that he must go again to Westminster; "but it shall be for a very short time, I swear; only while there is hope of contributing to prevent war. I feel myself in a manner bound." Napoleon's ambitions were growing apace. He made an armed entry into Switzerland, and Charles wrote on January 1, 1803, "The conduct of France in the Swiss business is no doubt disgusting," but he could still add, "Everybody seems to think that peace is more and more safe." However, consular proclamations annexing this territory and that grew more and more alarming, and while there was a popular desire for peace, there also arose the popular terror of Napoleon that was to make Britons sleep uneasy in their beds for the next thirteen years. Addington, of whom the warmest current eulogy ran—

> And but little though he meant,
> He meant that little well—

was clearly no man to face the rising menace. The country began to call again for Pitt, who since his resignation had attempted no interference in government. He now came back to support Addington with his counsels, and it was soon clear that before long he would have to take over the leadership again. As signs of French aggression increased, opinion in England hardened towards a renewal of war. Fox's belief in Napoleon was waning; he continued to write to his friends that if we had to fight again the fault would be Addington's, but he ceased to advocate the French cause in public. The government at length presented an ultimatum to Paris, demanding the restoration of Malta (which had been ceded in the Treaty of Amiens) for ten years, and making the evacuation of Holland and certain concessions to the Swiss conditions

of our acknowledging French claims in Italy. Napoleon rejected the proposals; on May 12, 1803, the English ambassador was recalled from Paris; and on the 18th, war between the two countries was again declared.

On the 23rd, the debate on the situation opened in the House. On that day Pitt, who had been rapidly approaching estrangement from Addington, supported the war, but pointedly refrained from any approval of ministerial conduct. On the 24th, Fox spoke, again for over three hours. He severely criticized the government, and with a wealth of detail explained his belief that the negotiations had been bungled, that possibilities of an honorable settlement had been neglected, and that whatever the conduct of France had been it could not, on the evidence before the House, be construed as an adequate cause for our declaration of war. He added, moreover, that we were totally without means of sustaining a new conflict, and that we could not look for an effective ally in Europe.

His arguments and his plea to the House for renewed efforts to avert this further disaster were alike sound; and they were alike unheeded. In these respects Fox spoke as it was inevitable that he should; but in another we remark a notable change of tone. He now attempted no defense of French behavior; he was, indeed, unsparing in his censure. Napoleon had, in defiance of an explicit treaty, outraged the people of Switzerland. No one, said the speaker, contemplated this "violent act of injustice" with greater indignation than he. The case of Holland was yet more intolerable. No words that he could use were strong enough to express his horror of French infamy toward the Dutch. Further, he was convinced that the French envoys who were in this country as commercial commissioners were in reality military spies, and he was decidedly for their immediate expulsion

and a demand for explanation from the consular government. In short, France was behaving abominably, but he was not yet convinced that it was our duty or our honor to correct her at immeasurable expense of means and life to ourselves.

It was commonly allowed that in this debate both Pitt and Fox rose to the height of their oratorical achievement, and a confirmed Pittite asserted that of the two, Fox's was "by far the greater effort of mind." And shrewd observers had a suspicion that the great rivals were not so very far apart in their views on the crisis. A few days later the suspicion was confirmed. Fox moved that the mediation of Russia be sought in the Anglo-French dispute. To the astonishment of Addington and his colleagues, Pitt supported the resolution, and the ministry evaded a division by accepting its principle. The proposal, however, came to nothing. On June 3, a vote of censure on the government was moved by the opposition. Pitt equivocally said that he could not agree to it, but that he could not pronounce Addington free from blame. The minister secured an overwhelming majority; but he knew that he had lost the support of Pitt, who was preposterously playing into the impotent hands of the incorrigible Fox. By June 6, Charles was back at St. Anne's Hill, writing to his nephew that Pitt's speech was "the best he ever made in that style." And then: "We are now here for good; and beautiful and delightful it is beyond measure. The nightingales have almost done; but the singing of the other birds, the verdure, the flowers, the lights and shades of this April-like weather, make the scene from this window such that I do not envy the orange trees etc. of your southern climates." Pitt, although —

he was to Addington
As London is to Paddington—

suffered temporary eclipse, a result of a curiously complicated vote on the censure.* And Charles remained in the country until the beginning of 1804.

5

By that time the political state of England had fallen into queer disorder. Addington's conduct of the war was plainly incompetent, and Pitt, actively concerned in strengthening our defenses against France, was none the less increasingly dissatisfied with ministerial policy. Moderate men in the opposition gradually came to the conclusion that the proper thing would be a concerted movement between himself and Fox to overthrow Addington, but this he refused to undertake, and when Fox returned to the House in February, 1804, the opposition sat in two hostile groups, though Pitt for a time maintained a pretense that he was not in opposition at all. In the meantime the king's health again showed ominous symptoms, and a Regency was once more in prospect.

Difficult as it is to define periods in national life, there are moments when we are specially conscious of change. In 1804, England was approaching one of these. George III was to retain a precarious sanity for five or six years yet, but the prince's party was increasingly active. Johnson and Reynolds were dead, Byron was writing his first poems and David Cox serving his apprenticeship by painting scenes in a London theater. Westminster was passing to the generation of Castlereagh, Canning, and Spencer Perceval. The representative figure of the new Whig party was Grey, of whom Fox

* Pitt proposed an amendment of his own; was heavily defeated by a majority that included Fox, who thereupon announced that much as he disapproved of the ministry, he should abstain from voting on the censure, as, if Addington were removed, a more dangerous successor might take his place.

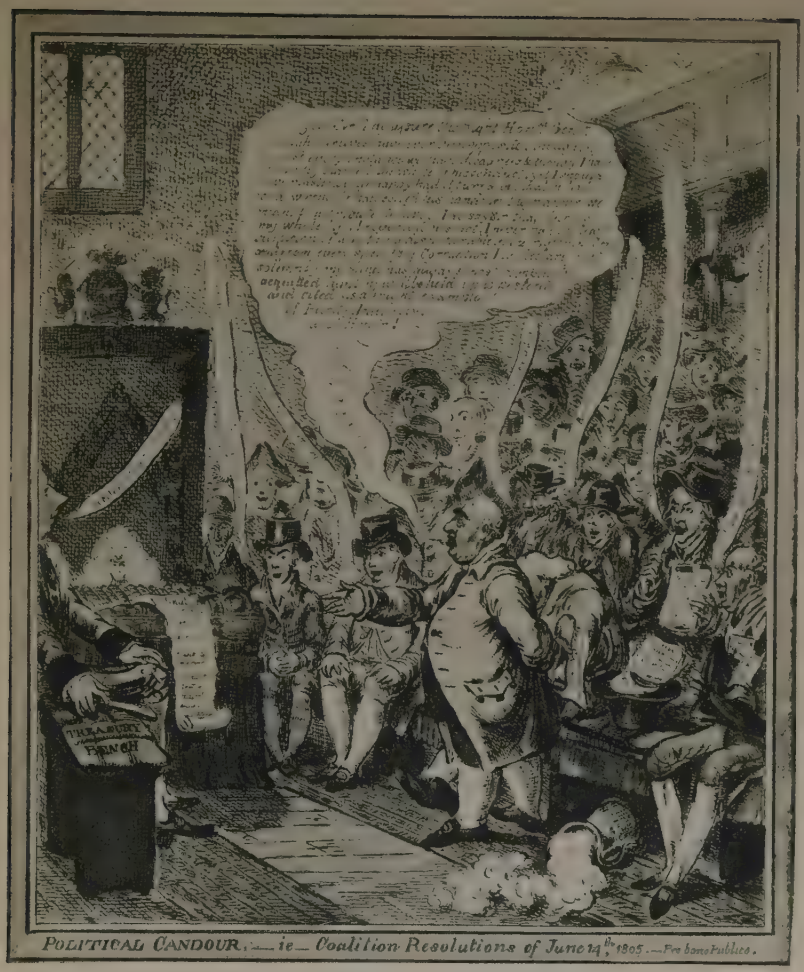
wrote in June, 1803, "He and I are, if possible, still more *one* than ever." The political spirit that Grey embodied was largely of Fox's inspiration, but the elder man was not to live to see its development in the new age. What his part in Regency government might have been had he done so, it is idle to speculate. When he came into office, he was already a dying man, and had but a few months in which to express himself. His part in political life from the opening of 1804 until his fatal illness in 1806, was important; but in noting its principal features we have to avoid drifting over into an era which was partly of his inception, but to which he did not belong.

In January, 1804, Charles told his nephew that he was "quite sick" of the political muddle, "so let us turn our minds to other subjects"—chiefly to scolding the young man for not having a better opinion of Cowper's poetry. In February he spoke on the volunteer bill, when he and Pitt were divided, but the two leaders voted together in March on the motion for an inquiry into Lord St. Vincent's naval administration, and again in April on national defense. On the last occasion, their combined attack reduced the government majority to twenty-one. In successive debates during April the pressure of opposition was maintained, Pitt assailing the ministers with growing passion, and Fox lending him astute and carefully timed support. Charles's friends were anxious. They foresaw the downfall of the government, and feared that Fox was not asserting himself sufficiently to keep the whip-hand of Pitt in any new arrangement. But there is no doubt that Fox had no such ambition; he was anxious for the dismissal of an incompetent minister, without any design of taking his place. On the 29th, Addington resigned, and on the 30th, Pitt was commanded by the king to submit his plan for a new administration.

In this plan Pitt was sincerely anxious to include Fox as one of the secretaries of state, but he let it be known that he would not make this an unalterable condition of his forming a government. Wilberforce notes that Pitt had told him that "he would never force Mr. Fox upon the King." Fox declared that he considered Pitt to be under no obligation whatever to him; and that he had no ambitions. But George, faithful to his old animosities, was decisive. He wrote to Pitt: "The whole tenour of Mr. Fox's conduct since he quitted his seat at the Board of Treasury, when under age, and more particularly at the Whig Club and other factious meetings, rendered his expulsion from the Privy Council indispensable, and obliges the King to express his astonishment that Mr. Pitt should one moment harbour the thought of bringing such a man before the royal notice. To prevent the repetition of it, the King declares that if Mr. Pitt persists in such an idea . . . his Majesty will have to deplore that he cannot avail himself of the ability of Mr. Pitt with necessary restrictions." And to Addington he wrote: "Mr. Fox is excluded by the express command of the King to Mr. Pitt."

Pitt yielded, with Fox's full approval. But Charles, with characteristic magnanimity, proposed that some of his friends should be included as strengthening the new ministry, and on their obvious deserts. This concession Pitt wrung from the king, but, not to be outdone in generosity by their leader, Grey, Windham, Robert Spencer, the Grenvilles, and other Whigs met at Carlton House, and thence conveyed a resolution to Pitt, desiring him to inform the king that they looked upon the exclusion of Fox as the exclusion of themselves. Political history has seldom provided a more inspiring spectacle of loyalty.

Pitt's proposed cabinet included the flower of intel-



Lord H. Petty Tierney Wilberforce Windham
Pitt Fox Grey
Erskine

POLITICAL CANDOR
Caricature by James Gillray, June, 1805

lect and character from both parties. The king's insensate prejudice reduced the plan to one of mediocrity. There has in recent years been a disposition in many writers to extricate George III from the damaging processes of history. Sir John Fortescue, in the correspondence that he has recently edited with so much spirit, has given a fresh impulse to this attempt. In this study of Fox, due prominence has, I hope, been given to the king's unquestionable merits. But as a king, George emerges from a careful reading of his voluminously documented reign, with a reputation that is past repair. For over forty years, he pursued a fixed policy of interference with the rights of ministers and with their duty to the people. And in excluding the Whigs from Pitt's administration of 1804, he set the seal on a long career of wrong-headed pertinacity.

Political events had thus thrown the two great men into a partnership that was frustrated by the royal will. In the crisis following upon the king's veto both behaved well; and in general terms there was between them a real if somewhat constrained respect. Though it must be added that, at moments of exasperation, Charles in his private correspondence gave expression to a distaste that Pitt's calculating coldness was always apt to excite in him. "He is a mean rascal after all," he wrote to Fitzpatrick, "and you, who have sometimes supposed him to be high-minded, were quite wrong"; and, even more vehemently, to Grey: "He is a low, mean-minded dog." But these asides among friends are not to be taken too seriously.

Pitt's government, deprived of the support that he so rightly desired, carried on with increasing difficulty until the autumn of 1805. Fox was now again the leader of a powerful opposition that could drive the government to extremely narrow divisions; on one occasion, on the mo-

tion for proceedings against Henry Dundas, Viscount Melville, for misuse of public funds as first lord of the admiralty, the figures were even, and the Speaker gave his casting vote against Pitt. This was in April, 1805, and the blow deeply affected the already ailing minister. Fox no longer opposed the war as such; he thought the government unduly alarmed about invasion, but he had now no illusions about Napoleon's imperial designs; it is engaging to note that he even enrolled in the Chertsey volunteers. But as the months went by, and affairs grew from bad to worse, he renewed his criticism of ministerial conduct, and in September Pitt felt himself forced again to beg the king to consent to a coalition. He was again refused, and Pitt was at the point of despair when his position was saved by news of Trafalgar. On November 7, Fox wrote to his nephew, "It is a great event, and by its solid as well as brilliant advantage, far more than compensates for the temporary succour which it will certainly afford Pitt in his distress. I am sorry for poor Nelson; for though his conduct at Naples was atrocious, I believe he was at bottom a good man, and it is hard he should not enjoy (and no man would have enjoyed it more) the popularity and glory of this last business."

But grateful as the news of Trafalgar was to Pitt, it came to a dying man. The story of his last days does not belong to this study. Early in December he was moved to Bath in a state of extreme debility, but with renewed hopes. While he was there he received the news of Napoleon's crushing success at Austerlitz, and the shock was fatal to his already broken health. "Pitt," wrote Wilberforce, "was killed by the enemy as much as Nelson." With great difficulty he was carried back to his Putney Heath villa, Hayes, which he reached on January 11. There he lingered until the 23rd, when Macaulay's "tall

man in a crowd, who was forced on by those behind him," died, at the age of forty-seven, with the classic words on his lips, "Oh, my country—how I leave my country." Pitt is not an easy person to love; but he was a very great Englishman.

When pubic honors to Pitt were voted in the Commons, Fox opposed the motion in a speech that was a perfect epitome of his oratorical genius. He spoke with deep respect for his rival; he concurred warmly in the proposal that his debts should be paid; but he could not vote for public honors to a man whose whole conduct in recent affairs had been a denial of Fox's own faith. As an example of Fox's style, and as a revelation of his character, I have printed this speech at length in an appendix to this volume. And here may be added a note from Dr. Whalley, prebendary of Wells, to Anna Seward, who had written to him of "the wretched Pitt." It is dated April 23, 1806, when Charles was in office. "Though I have not your exalted opinion of Mr. Fox, yet I rejoice to see him our Secretary for Foreign Affairs, because he is very able, intrepid, and hates the despotism of France. Were I to show him your letter he would be disgusted and hurt at its violence against his dead rival. He has done himself honour by evincing on several occasions that he knows how to acknowledge Mr. Pitt's merits." *

6

The future was with Fox; or would have been but that he too was near his end. Pitt's party, in effective strength, amounted to no more than Pitt himself. His death left his followers confusedly lost without a leader. They told the king that they were incapable of forming a a new administration. George, for once in his life, rea-

* *Journals and Correspondence of Thomas Sedgwick Whalley* (1863).

lized that argument was futile, and sent for William Wyndham, Lord Grenville, who told his Majesty that he could not proceed without consultation with Fox as the guiding spirit of the Whigs. The king replied that he knew his command to have that meaning.

Thus came into being, in February, 1806, the Ministry of All the Talents.* Grenville was its nominal head, but Fox, as secretary of state, was its known dictator. The king's daughter, Princess Augusta, has left a record of the first meeting of her father and his old antagonist in these sudden circumstances. "When Mr. Fox came into the closet for the first time, his Majesty purposely made a short pause, and then said: 'Mr. Fox, I little thought you and I should ever meet again in this place. But I have no desire to look back upon old grievances, and you may rest assured I shall never remind you of them.' Mr. Fox replied, 'My deeds, and not my words, shall commend me to your Majesty.' "

In personal conduct, Charles was punctilious from that moment in treating the king with every possible consideration. In public policy, he had three governing motives: peace with France; Catholic emancipation; and, under the steady persuasion of Wilberforce, the abolition of slavery. On the last question, two indications of Fox's

*First lord of the treasury (prime minister), Lord Grenville; lord high chancellor, Lord Erskine; president of the council, Earl Fitzwilliam; lord privy seal, Lord Sidmouth (Addington); first lord of the admiralty, Lord Howick (Grey); master general of the ordnance, Lord Moira; home secretary, Earl Spencer; foreign secretary, Charles James Fox; war and colonial offices, William Windham; chancellor of the exchequer, Lord Henry Petty; lord chief justice, Lord Ellenborough; secretary of war (in addition to Windham), Richard Fitzpatrick; chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Earl of Derby; president of the board of trade, Lord Auckland; treasurer of the navy, Richard Brinsley Sheridan; joint paymaster general, Earl Temple, Lord John Townshend; joint postmaster general, Earl of Buckinghamshire, Earl of Carysfort; master of the rolls, Sir William Grant; attorney general, Sir Arthur Pigott; solicitor general, Sir Samuel Romilly; lord lieutenant of Ireland, Duke of Bedford.

attitude may be given. In March, 1806, Wilberforce had several interviews with him on the subject, finding him "quite rampant and playful, as he was twenty-two years ago." Charles told Wilberforce that he thought they could carry the reform in the Commons, but that it would be defeated by the Lords in deference to the wishes of the king, the Prince of Wales, "and other anti-abolitionists." But Wilberforce had no doubt of Fox's sincerity in the matter, and afterwards learned that he had induced the prince "to give his honour not to stir adversely." And the last speech Charles ever made in parliament, on June 10, was to move "That this House, conceiving the African slave trade to be contrary to the principles of justice, humanity, and sound policy, will, with all practicable expedition, proceed to take effectual measures for abolishing the said trade, in such manner, and at such periods, as may be deemed advisable." In the course of this speech he said: "If, during the almost forty years that I have had the honour of a seat in parliament, I had been so fortunate as to accomplish that, and that only, I should think I had done enough, and could retire from public life with comfort, and the conscious satisfaction that I had done my duty." The motion was carried by 114 votes to 15.

The question of Catholic relief was one of greater complexity. It was one that Pitt had been forced to abandon for fear of driving the king to renewed insanity. And now, Fox, in office, found himself faced with the same necessity for compromise. His views in favor of relief were well known, but he had a double reason for not advancing them now. "I am determined," he told the Austrian minister, "not to annoy my sovereign by bringing [the Roman Catholic question] forward." Charles knew well enough the understatement of "annoy." To

bring the matter to the king's mind meant almost certain derangement, and, however much Charles may have desired a regency, he had given his word that so far as honor permitted the king should be treated with consideration. And he believed that in advising the Catholics to bide their time, both honor and policy were served. He told them, quite justly, that if the government at that stage introduced an emancipation bill, they would inevitably be defeated, and that a new ministry would probably be formed on a definitely anti-Catholic basis. He promised them that in the meantime the government would use every effort to lighten the operation of existing laws in practice, and to extend privileges that they already enjoyed. He promised further that if, in spite of his counsel, their petition were presented to parliament, he would openly support it with all his power. And so Catholic relief dropped out of the immediate program of the Ministry of All the Talents. That Charles firmly believed in the advantages of the reforms that were to come later, is clear from all his private and public utterances on the question; and it is no less clear that in advising a suspension of Catholic claims in 1806, he was speaking as an enlightened statesman.

7

The chief preoccupation of Charles's mind on return to power, was peace with France and a liberal readjustment of European affairs. Whether, if he had lived, his undoubted genius for foreign policy could have curbed the swelling tide of Napoleonic ambitions, we cannot tell. He was, perhaps, as likely as any man in Europe to do it, but again fortune was to leave his powers untested, and this time with a final interdict. Charles started well by a personal gesture. A political incendiary named

Gervillière called upon him to divulge a plot for the assassination of Napoleon. Fox had him arrested, and at once communicated with Talleyrand, warning him of the danger. Napoleon sent his thanks, recognizing "the principles and honour which have always distinguished Mr. Fox" and hoping for a speedy solution of difficulties under the guidance of a cabinet inspired by such a spirit. It may have been no more than the language of diplomacy, but also it may have been that Fox was on the way to discovering an approach to the emperor,* inaccessible to other men. But the promise of February had become obscured by the end of April, when Fox wrote, "All negotiation with France is now, I understand, at an end." It was renewed, only to be wrecked again by Napoleon's exorbitant demands. Fox was learning that his task was formidable beyond all his hopes. "The manner in which the French fly from their word . . . disheartens me. . . . They are playing a false game; and in that case it would be very imprudent to make any concessions which . . . could be thought inconsistent with our honour, or could furnish our allies with a plausible pretence for suspecting, reproaching, or deserting us." His determination for peace was unshaken, but he was a realist in his visions.

How the determination would have prospered, we do not know. At the end of May, Mrs. Fox was speaking with some anxiety of her husband's health. Early in June, Trotter was shocked by his appearance. On the 10th, he spoke, as we have seen, on the slave trade, and for a few days continued to go down to the House. His friends wanted him to lighten his labors by taking a peerage, but he would not listen to them. By the end of the month he was incapable of attending Westminster, and his public life was at an end.

* Napoleon had been crowned in 1804.

CHAPTER XVI

The Last Days

1806

I

CHARLES'S MALADY WAS A DROPSY. THE SYMPTOMS HAD been developing for several months, but he did not like doctors, and fancied himself as his own physician. He supposed he was suffering from scurvy, and treated himself accordingly, with very unsatisfactory results. The anonymous young gentleman who had relieved the tedium of Mr. Fox's leisure by submitting his drama for perusal, tells us that his patron ran up considerable annual bills for "rhubarb and vegetable decoctions," with Paytherus, a chemist of Bond Street.

Fox's London house at this time was in Stable Yard, St. James's, and it was here that he lay up on retiring from Westminster. Early in July, his condition was such that his friends insisted on authoritative medical advice, and it was then that his disease was for the first time rightly diagnosed. For a week or two there seemed to be no imminent danger. Mrs. Fox, in pages of her journal printed as an Appendix to "The Life and Letters of Lady Sarah Lennox," wrote on June 22, "Carl, not better, dined at home. . . . Carl did not come out of his dressing room, but saw a few people there." On July 12, after several anxious days, she adds, "Yesterday . . . I thought him a great deal better. and God Almighty be praised,

I was not deceived, for he has had a charming night, and seems better still."

But the recovery was brief. By the turn of the month he was known to be a very ill man, and "the garden of the House at Stable Yard was daily filled with anxious enquirers." * His cabinet colleagues, foreign ambassadors, and a host of private friends were among the visitors. Though Charles could see but few of them, the Prince of Wales was admitted freely to his room. When his Royal Highness was out of town, Trotter was asked to forward a daily report of the patient's condition. On August 7, the operation of tapping became necessary, and was borne "with great calmness and resolution." When it was over, Charles gave instructions to his nephew that he was to be told plainly when he was in real danger. "We are neither of us children, and it would be ridiculous to conceal anything." For three or four days he was prostrated, and then a gleam of hope returned. He gained strength, and was able to see a few friends, even to show a momentary and parting interest in state affairs. He begged to be taken to St. Anne's Hill. The doctors decided against the journey at a single stage, and the Duke of Devonshire offered his house at Chiswick as a resting place by the way. On August 27, he accordingly left London, and the next morning the Globe printed the following account of his departure:

Mr Fox left his house in Stable Yard, St James's, yesterday, at four o'clock in the afternoon, for Chiswick. . . . A platform, covered with green baize, was raised from the hall door, gently ascending to the bottom of the carriage, so that he might enter it more with ease than by the gradation of the steps. A crowd of people attended from an early hour at the door, where the carriage had been waiting for a considerable time. . . . Mr Fox had a brown loose mantle

* Trotter.

thrown over his shoulders, and wore very wide nankeen pantaloons, and a fur travelling cap. His appearance excited great emotion among the spectators, many of whom shed tears on seeing the change in his countenance, which bore strong marks of the severity of his disease.

The change of air brought a little benefit, but the trouble now was beyond cure. On the 27th, it was decided that there must be a second operation. Charles consented on condition that he was first removed to St. Anne's Hill. The condition was impossible, the operation was performed, and again he bore the most horrible and revolting ordeal with lovely courage. He talked to the physicians, says Trotter, "with all his usual force, accuracy, and pleasant natural manners," until he succumbed to the faintness of pain. It was clear that the operation had accomplished no more than a moment's respite.

2

There was now nothing left but the love of friends, and above all the exquisitely devoted attention of Elizabeth Fox. In the intervals between lethargy and lethargy, Charles was eager always to be read to, and his wife, Trotter, Caroline Fox, and "dear Young One" took turns with Dryden, Virgil, Johnson's "Lives," Swift, and the new novels. Fitzpatrick joined the company of faithful watchers. On the Friday after the second operation Charles took an airing in a garden-chair, and on the two following days was able to go out in the carriage with Elizabeth. He was cheerful, kept his hand in hers all the while, asked her several times to kiss him, and when they came within sight of the Thames made her repeat Denham's lines from "Cooper's Hill":

> Thames, the most lov'd of all the Ocean's sons
> By his old sire, to his embraces runs;
> Hasting to pay his tribute to the sea,
> Like mortal life to meet eternity.

Grey Sidmouth Windham Grenville Moira Sheridan Robt. Spencer
Fox Petty Bedford Tierney Erskine

MAKING DECENT

Caricature by James Gillray, February 1806

On September 7, he transacted his last public business. George Jackson, the British chargé d'affaires in Prussia, had returned to England, and Fox insisted on seeing him. Jackson, who was a young man of twenty at the time, has left his own account of the interview, in his "Diaries and Letters." He found Fox, who received him at ten in the morning, "looking wretchedly ill," but "conversing more cheerfully and freely than I had expected." He discovered, however, that Mrs. Fox had been taken unawares, and, *en déshabillé,* was imprisoned in an adjoining closet, whence he heard at length a voice complaining, "Mr. Fox, my dear, the young man's gone, I think? Can't I come out, my dear? I'm so very, very, cold." So that for young Mr. Jackson it was all rather an amusing experience.

On the next day, September 8, the symptoms dispelled the last remaining hope. For five days more he struggled on. Elizabeth had sent to St. Anne's Hill for "a comfortable sick-chair" that she knew he liked, and in it he would sit, putting up a brave pretense. Once only did Elizabeth give way before him, and he said, "Oh, fie, Liz, is this your promise?" For, "we had agreed . . . that whichever was likely to die first, the other should stay by all the time, and try to look gay and cheerful." After his Paris visit, Charles had written to his nephew, "I do not reckon Lord Henry Petty because I have been speaking of foreigners only, but never did I see a young man I liked half so much." And now, on September 12, Henry Petty, chancellor of the exchequer at twenty-six, came to the bedside of his chief, and "unable to repress his emotions" was desired by the physicians to "retire to another part of the room." On the same day, someone brought in a young clergyman. Prayers were read; Charles was making his own peace, but he liked to think

that the prayers would be a comfort to Elizabeth; that comfort, indeed, was now his chief concern. A peculiar gentleman, the Right Hon. George Rose, closely associated in administration with Pitt, has left, in his "Diaries and Correspondence" reflections on this scene which should not pass unrecorded here:

> Thus died . . . he whom Lord Holland ventures to call "the best and greatest man of his time." Whether he was in any sense good or great, he and Lord Holland, and the whole world will know, when we all stand before the judgment seat of Christ; but, in the meantime, what can be more shocking to a well-regulated mind, than the picture here presented to us of a dying man, with expanded understanding, almost it would appear destitute of a divine grace, with no care apparently for his soul, no fear of judgment, submitting to a cold formality of prayer, in which he takes no interest, and seeks no profit, not from any sense of duty, or any desire of spiritual good, but merely to soothe and satisfy his wife?

It appears, however, that the right honorable gentleman was an authority on finance.

"The night which succeeded," says Trotter, "was one of horror." And Elizabeth: "He had very little sleep, and continued getting out of bed every moment almost as soon as he was in." The next morning he was quieter, and lay silent until noon. Then he said good-by to "dear Young One," and asked Elizabeth to kiss him. Taking her hand, he looked at her "with a heavenly smile, and said, 'I die happy, but pity you.' " He drowsed again, until he found her still standing by him, trying desperately to keep her promise. With an effort he spoke: "It don't signify, my dearest, dearest Liz." And on the clear September afternoon, at "twenty minutes before six by a watch regulated by the sun," he died. He was buried, on October 10, in Westminster Abbey.

CHAPTER XVII

Epilogue

I

TO THE STORY THAT HAS HERE BEEN TOLD OF CHARLES Fox's life and character, there is little that I now can add. He was a man greatly loved, and greatly memorable. He is, perhaps, the greatest figure in the history of parliamentary opposition in England. If we think that, had he lived another ten or twenty years, he would have become also a great English minister, we have the support of Gibbon, who said that Fox, "in the conduct of a party, approved himself equal to the conduct of an empire." His public life had the supreme virtue of fearlessness. Frances, Lady Shelley, in her "Diary," notes a conversation with one of his secretaries in 1814, when she was told that Fox, on coming into office, was approached, in accordance with the custom of the time, by "writers of various newspapers" for employment. A number of them were already in pay of the government. "Mr. Fox, in an interview, told them that they must expect neither money nor encouragement from him, and desired that they should all be paid up to that day. He then discharged them." It is a significant straw.

The devotion of his many friends has been a theme of this book. With a political vision far in advance of his time, his was a lonely mind, but he was never a lonely man. To the many instances of this personal attachment, two may be added. When Coke of Norfolk heard of his

death, he wrote: "You do not need to be told how deeply I regret poor Fox. I not only mourn him as an individual, but as the greatest man in Europe." And in All Saints Church at Hertford may be seen the words that Lord John Townshend devised as his own epitaph: "The friend and companion of Mr. Fox, a distinction which was the pride of his life, and the only one he was desirous might be recorded after his death."

There was a Mr. Rose here and there, but even among Charles's political antagonists, few were able to speak much ill of him. Gillray himself had moments when he was off his guard, and the Anti-Jacobin's tirades were damp squibs when Fox was the mark, though it must be allowed that not Canning but the very inferior Ellis was then usually the poet of the occasion. Wilberforce knew what his slavery campaign owed to Fox's support, but in other respects he had small sympathy with the sedition-monger of the Whig Club, and the man who "has not one religious friend or one who knows anything about it." But when Fox died, he wrote, "So poor Fox is gone at last. I am more affected by it than I thought I should be." And nearly twenty years afterwards, he could add: "Fox was often truly wonderful. He would begin at full tear, and roll on for hours together without tiring either himself or us." And again, "He was truly amiable in private life."

In the same way, Lord Malmesbury had found himself violently at issue with Fox on public affairs since the Whig breach of 1793. And yet he, too, could pay his tribute in 1806: "No country within the short space of six months ever lost two such able statesmen as Pitt and Fox . . . a loss felt less at the instant than it will be some time hence. They left no equal in their line, and after such superiority the nation will not be contented

with moderate abilities. Fox lived long enough to be regretted by all, as he certainly acted his part most ably and honourably from the time he took office."

2

And, in conclusion, there is the word of George III, the king whom Fox for thirty-five years in the ardor of his liberalism had fought on the Marriage Act, on Catholic relief, on dissent, on India, on Slavery, on America, and on France. In 1828, John Cam Hobhouse told Lord Holland that he had heard from Grey that "the King liked Fox in his last administration, and no one else." Holland denied it, saying that when he had an audience of the king after Fox's death, George said no word of his late minister. But against this we have the evidence of Trotter, who says that during Fox's last illness "the whole Royal Family manifested respect and sympathy for the great patriot." Which in itself might not amount to much as testimony, but that it is supported by more definite authority. Lord John Russell was told by the Duchess of Gloucester, the king's daughter, that she was with her father when he received news of Charles's death. The old man, so mad and so brave, said that the country could ill afford to lose such a man, and then, "I never thought I should have regretted the death of Mr. Fox as much as I do." It was a strange conclusion to one of the most relentless feuds in English history.

APPENDIX

Funeral Honors to the Memory of Mr. Pitt

January 27, 1806

MR. HENRY LASCELLES MOVED, "THAT AN HUMBLE ADdress be presented to his majesty that his majesty will be graciously pleased to give directions, that the remains of the right honourable William Pitt be interred at the public charge; and that a monument be erected in the collegiate church of St. Peter, Westminster, to the memory of that excellent statesman, with an inscription expressive of the public sense of so great and irreparable a loss; and to assure his majesty that this House will make good the expences attending the same." The motion was seconded by the Marquis of Titchfield, and supported by Lord Louvaine, Mr. J. H. Browne, Mr. H. Addington, Sir R. Buxton, General Tarleton, Earl Temple, Mr. Ryder, Mr. Rose, Lord Castlereagh, and Mr. Wilberforce. It was opposed by Lord Folkestone, Mr. William Smith, the Marquis of Douglas, Mr. Windham, Mr. Ponsonby, and Mr. Fox.

Mr. Fox rose and spoke as follows:—I do not know, Sir, that I ever rose to address the House in the performance of my public duty with more pain than I do at this moment. I therefore hope that I shall experience some indulgence, if, before I give my vote on this question, I should shortly state the reasons which compel me to oppose the motion now proposed by the honourable gentleman under the gallery. The honourable gentleman

says, that all party feelings and political animosities should be laid aside on the present occasion. I assure him, that I do lay aside all party feelings. If I had any such at this time, they would lead me to vote with the honourable gentleman and not against him. At the same time I do not pretend to undervalue party feelings. When a person is convinced that the opinions which he holds, if acted upon, would be productive of benefit to his country, but finds that the only chance of having them acted upon depends upon his connection with a party, and the support which by this means he may acquire, it is his duty to have recourse to a party. He may consider this fairly and justly as the best mode of effectually carrying into execution those measures which, in his estimation, are the most calculated to promote the public prosperity and happiness. But at present it is obvious to every one, that all the motives which are likely to influence me, as far as party is concerned, are on the side of the honourable gentleman, and would lead me to vote with him. The honourable gentleman must see, that if the gratification of party feelings, if ambition, if private interest, were my objects, the most proper course for me to pursue, would be to give an immediate assent to this motion. Upon such a supposition, every one must be sensible how much it would be to my interest to conciliate, as much as possible, all those who had the greatest respect and value for Mr. Pitt, to drown, if it could be done, the very remembrance of our political contests, and endeavour to gain, by every means that could be imagined, their support and favour. This would be the line of conduct which party views would suggest, as the most proper to follow. But this is not all: there are other motives of no less weight, that strongly recommend the same mode of proceeding. For many of the supporters of the present motion I have a

personal friendship, which would make me reluctant to oppose them on such an occasion; but, most of all would it be to my interest, as well as my inclination, not to cross, in this instance, the views of the noble lord near me [Earl Temple] and other near relations of the deceased minister, with whom I am now likely to be, for the remainder of my life, inseparably connected. The vote, therefore, may be considered as one not given to gratify any feeling of private animosity, or of public ambition, but extorted by a most painful but imperious sense of duty. In every party point of view then, whether my object should be to conciliate those who have the warmest attachment to the memory of Mr. Pitt, or to join with those who are already my political friends, my plan would be to support the honourable gentleman's motion. I will go farther, and say that if feelings were to be allowed to direct our conduct on this occasion, the right honourable gentleman opposite [Mr. Rose] might address to our feelings arguments much more powerful than those which he has just now addressed to our reasons. I, Sir, have been engaged in a long course of opposition to the person for whom public honours are now claimed. I may say that I have been considered, and perhaps it may be called an honour, his rival. But I do assure the right honourable gentleman and his most zealous admirers, that, during all that time, I never opposed him from personal motive.

I will go still farther, and say, that another motive would lead me to support the motion, and that is the respect which I entertain for many of Mr. Pitt's personal qualities. Great qualities he certainly had, in no ordinary degree, in private life: and great qualities also in points connected with his administration. I do not think this a proper time to enter upon the particular acts of that ad-

ministration; but in the measure for the establishment of a real sinking fund, he had always my warmest support, and I freely declare my opinion, that this has done a great deal of good to the nation, and, that for this, therefore, the country is highly obliged to him. There is another quality for which he deserves great praise. No minister was ever more disinterested, as far as related to pecuniary matters. His integrity and moderation, in this respect, are confirmed by the state of his affairs when he died. I allow that a minister is not to be considered as moderate and disinterested, merely because he is poor during his life, or at his death. But when I see a minister, who has been in office above twenty years, with the full command of places and public money, without any peculiar extravagance and waste, except what might be expected from the carelessness that perhaps necessarily arose from the multiplicity of duties, to which the attention of a man, in such a situation, must be directed; when I see a minister, under such circumstances, using his influence neither to enrich himself, nor those with whom he is, by family ties, the more peculiarly connected, it is impossible for me not to conclude that this man is disinterested. I must say, that he has, with regard to private emolument, acted with a high degree of integrity and moderation. In the course of the long administration of Mr. Pitt, all that he took for himself, was, I believe, the wardenship of the Cinque Ports. This was certainly in him highly disinterested; and his disinterestedness in this respect shines with the more lustre, when we consider the mode in which, according to report, this reward has been since disposed of. I, therefore, Sir, have every reason, from my intimate friendship and near connection with the living, and from my own private feeling and respect for the dead, who undoubtedly possessed many

estimable qualities, to give my support to the motion now before the House. I might be led to this by another motive. If personal vanity had any weight with me, I might from this consideration concur with the honourable gentleman. I might by this means gain a great deal of applause, without any loss whatever in a party point of view, and I do not pretend to be insensible to praise any more than others. But there are cases, Sir, in which our public duty is so clear and imperious, that no desire of praise, no motive of personal respect, no wish to gratify our friends, nor any other consideration, however powerful, can possibly enable us to dispense with it, and in my conscience, Sir, I believe this to be one of these cases. If the marks of respect were such as did not compromise my public duty in the compliance, no person would join in it more cheerfully and more eagerly than I would. If, for instance, it had been proposed to remedy those pecuniary difficulties which Mr. Pitt had incurred in the course of his political life; if it had been proposed to do those things for his relations in that way, which his own acknowledged disinterestedness did not allow him to do; if it had been proposed to supply the deficiencies of his own fortune, I would most willingly consent that all this should be done in the most liberal manner. But it is a very different thing to be called upon to confer honours upon Mr. Pitt as an "excellent statesman." We ought not, Sir, in such cases, to be complimented out of our consent, if our public duty commands us to oppose the grant of such honours. Public honours are matters of the highest importance, because they must more or less influence posterity. They ought not, therefore, to be conferred lightly, but only where merit is clearly seen and acknowledged. I could farther add, Sir, that the manner in which the honourable gentleman opened this business,

would lead me to give his motion my support; but when public honours are solicited, it becomes me to consult neither my interest nor my feelings, but to adhere rigidly and conscientiously to the line of public duty. I need not add any thing to what has been said respecting honours conferred upon military men and statesmen, by my right honourable friend on the bench near me [Mr. Windham], who has so ably and clearly pointed out the distinction between the two cases. As little need I add to what has been said by my honourable friend on my right hand [Mr. Ponsonby], respecting many eminent public men, on whom no honours of this kind were conferred, and for whom none were solicited, though their talents, virtues, and good intentions were unquestionable. It is not to particular acts only that we are to look; we must consider the general effect which these acts produce, with a view to the public benefit. Certainly, when I look at Lord Chatham's monument; when I find it there stated, that he had reduced the power of France to a very low ebb, and raised the prosperity of his country to a very high pitch; I must say, that this case can never be compared with that of Lord Chatham. I must say, that the country at present is reduced to the most dangerous and alarming situation—a situation which might call for any thing rather than honours to be conferred upon him, who had the direction of the measures which brought it to this state. The right honourable gentleman [Mr. Rose] has told us, that in the case of Lord Chatham there was the most perfect unanimity, though there were many in the House who had opposed his political principles. Why, so there was; but then, Sir, the merit was clear, and the inscription related to points on which there must have been the most perfect unanimity; and though certainly during the seven years' war there was a strong

opposition, yet his merit on certain points, to which the inscription referred, was allowed by the bitterest of his antagonists.

But, though no consideration ought to induce us to betray our trust in conferring the public honours, yet at the same time there are cases in which the effects of this might be less sensibly felt. For instance, in cases where we should be compelled to oppose particular acts of an administration, we might still make a clear distinction between what was good and what was bad. In the present case I shall not enter upon the particular acts. In deciding upon this question, I should be unwilling to take any one particular act of the administration of the late minister. I always thought, and do still think, that an unfortunate system of government has pervaded the whole of the present reign; and I firmly believe that system to have been the cause of all the disasters and disappointments which the country has experienced, almost uniformly throughout the whole course of it. Being of this opinion, how can I conscientiously say that he who followed this system was an "excellent statesman"? To that system I ascribe the loss of the American colonies, and I cannot but impute blame, instead of praise or honour, to all the ministers who have supported it. The Earl of Guilford * who conducted the war, in the event of which those colonies were lost, was a man of very uncommon talents, and of very amiable qualities. Towards the latter part of his life, I was connected with him, not only in political opinions, but also in habits of the most intimate friendship. But, notwithstanding all that, I have no hesitation in declaring, that if, at the decease of that nobleman, any motion similar to the present had been made in this House, much as I esteemed and

* North

loved him, and still more dearly as I loved his son, the late earl, I should have been the very foremost to oppose it. Thinking as I do of the disastrous effects of that system, which I before stated to have prevailed throughout the present reign, I cannot but accuse the late minister of having, I will not say criminally, for the expression might sound, in some ears, too harsh, but, most unfortunately, lent his brilliant talents and his commanding eloquence, to the support of it. In having done so, and with the knowledge he must have had of it, I esteem him the more culpable, as without that splendour of mental endowment, which enabled him to throw a veil over the hideous deformity of the system alluded to, I am fully persuaded, that it could not have resisted the attacks made upon it, and consequently could not have existed, and spread its baneful influence half so long. No man can be more desirous than I am, to bury in oblivion the remembrance of those contests in which we were so long engaged. This I showed plainly enough while he was alive. But, I cannot consent to confer public honours, on the ground of his being an "excellent statesman," on the man, who, in my opinion, was the sole, certainly the chief supporter of a system, which I had early been taught to consider as a bad one. Thinking thus, it cannot be expected that I should so far forget my public duty, and the principles which I have uniformly professed, as to subscribe to the condemnation of those principles, by agreeing to the motion now before the House. But, I defy the honourable gentleman, I defy any person who differs from me, I defy any one of those who are most desirous of misrepresenting my motives, to point out any possible feeling of interest or ambition, that could induce me to oppose it. My motive is a sense of public duty, which would be violated, if I were to agree to confer honours,

on grounds which to me do not appear to warrant my concurrence.

Sir, I am sorry that this motion was ever made. I said so before, and if those who were most nearly connected with Mr. Pitt by the ties of blood, and who may be supposed to be most interested in his glory, and the respect that is to attend his memory, had been consulted, I believe a mode might have been struck out, by which a suitable mark of respect might have been conferred on him, without reducing us to this dilemma. Now, however, it is too late. The thing is done, and cannot be helped, and nothing remains for us but to do our duty, however much our feelings may be hurt by the performance. I must therefore conclude with saying, that, in my opinion, my public duty calls me, in the most imperious and irresistible manner, to oppose the motion; and that, however painful to my feelings in every respect it may be, I must do my duty.

The House divided on Mr. Lascelles' motion:

	Tellers			*Tellers*	
Yeas	Mr. H. Lascelles Marq. of Titchfield	258.	Noes	Visc. Folkestone Mr. W. Smith	89

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B. The following books have also been consulted, particularly those marked with an asterisk.

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C. Occasional reference has been made to the following:

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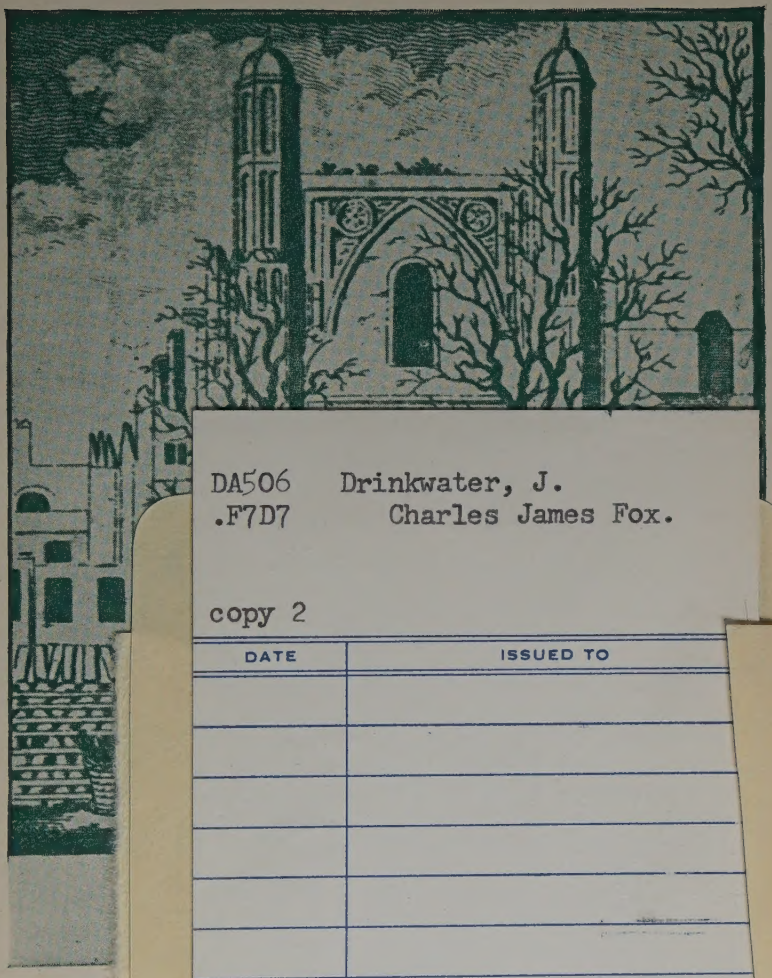

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